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# Reporting Matt Murdock's Double Life: The Image of the Journalist in Marvel Comics' Daredevil

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Robby Wayne O'Daniel entitled "Reporting Matt Murdock's Double Life: The Image of the Journalist in Marvel Comics' Daredevil." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.

Paul G. Ashdown, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Elizabeth M. Hendrickson, Margaret L. Dean

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Reporting Matt Murdock's Double Life: The Image of the Journalist in Marvel Comics'

*Daredevil*

A Thesis Presented for

The Master of Science

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Robby Wayne O'Daniel

May 2012

## Abstract

Popular entertainments often provide the general public with a construct for who a journalist is and what the work of a journalist entails. It is important to study journalists in the popular culture to understand how the idea of the journalist is conceived by those who do not go to newsrooms and do not have first-hand experience with how journalists work. In order to do their jobs, journalists must regularly interact with the public at large, gathering facts, coordinating appointments, interviewing and so on. If these people have a negative image of the journalist, it would be helpful for journalists to understand how and where that image might come from, in order to better communicate with the public at large and have greater ease in doing their jobs.

Comic books, in particular, have received little academic interest. Yet in comic books like *Daredevil*, created by writer Stan Lee and artist Bill Everett, a supporting character – seasoned investigative journalist Ben Urich – is among the cast of characters, and throughout the narrative, characters interact with journalists and journalism.

This thesis uses textual analysis to look at what kind of categories journalists and journalism are placed in throughout the pages of various *Daredevil* comics from the beginning of the series in 1964 to the present. The study found that widely conflicting depictions of journalists exist in the pages of *Daredevil* comics. Journalists are mostly portrayed as negative, yet many characters rely on journalism daily for major information and entertainment. Urich is portrayed as an excellent journalist by others, but at times, he acts like a reporting novice.

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## Introduction

Journalism is commonly greeted with cynicism and generalizations about “the media.” Stereotypes color journalists as lazy, inaccurate, nosy, unethical, greedy and apathetic about the interests of the public. It is a phenomenon that led the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation and the Society of Professional Journalists to use a \$25,000 grant to start the Campaign for Ethical Journalism in 2007 to promote public confidence in journalism (Geimann, 2007). The General Social Survey takes yearly polls of public confidence in institutions, and public confidence in the press has had the steepest decline over the time period of 1973-2004 (Gronke and Cook, 2007). The press is the only institution that has shown constant declines over the time period, while the others have had statistically significant increases and decreases. So it is apparent from the data that the public’s low perception of media as a whole is not a myth, and that constant declining perception is most severe for the media. But where do these negative images of journalists originate? Joe Saltzman, director of the Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture project, says they come from both real journalists and journalists in popular culture, with the public amalgamating all the images together and making no real distinction between fictional and non-fictional journalists (Saltzman, 2005).

This judgment would tip the scale in favor of negative images of journalists, as negative portrayals of the professionals date back at least to novels in the mid-1800s like *Five Hundred Majority*, *The Gilded Age* and *John Andross* (Saltzman, 2005). In *Sevenoaks: A Story of To-Day*, Saltzman says the depicted newspaper, the *New York Tattler*, represented "the typical newspaper presented in the fiction of the day," one that dealt in scandals, hoaxes and damaged reputations. "The press was usually in collusion with sordid business and political interests, interests not

merely indifferent to the public welfare, but hostile to it," Saltzman says. The *New York Times'* David Carr agrees with the assessment that images in popular culture help to form opinions of journalists, saying that the unscrupulous editor in *Batman* serves as a real-life editor's proxy to viewers (Carr, 2005). He also says films in which journalists are depicted as unaccountable outnumber those with hero journalists.

While films have enjoyed wide scholarly interest in the burgeoning research on the image of the journalist in popular culture, comics surprisingly have been overlooked (Saltzman, 2005). Despite the most famous superhero in the world, Superman, serving as mild-mannered journalist Clark Kent when he is not in tights, very little has been done with the image of the journalist in comic books, especially contemporary ones. And specifically in Marvel Comics, journalists are taking a more active role. Film has progressed from virtually every popular actor portraying a journalist in the 1930s and 1940s to popular actors being hounded by pack journalists by the 1980s. There are still films with a journalist as the main character, although most portrayals now are of journalists as minor characters.

But in comics, specifically in Marvel Comics since the turn of the millennium, journalists have been stars in their own series. Titles like *Deadline* and *The Pulse* have portrayed everyday journalists and their work, usually while they deal with superheroes on a daily basis. These journalists do not have superpowers themselves. There is no Superman. In fact, Marvel has started to release, along with the company's major comic events, mini-series that show how journalists are reporting the news. *Civil War: Front Line*, *World War Hulk: Front Line*, *Secret Invasion: Front Line* and *Siege: Embedded* all show how journalists report the major events going on in Marvel Comics.



The *Cleveland Plain Dealer*'s Michael Sangiacomo sees a split in the credibility of journalists as accurate portrayals of the job in comics (Knight, 2009). Newer faces in comics, like Kat Farrell (*Deadline*), Sally Floyd (*Civil War: Front Line*) and others are more accurate depictions than the true "star" journalists of earlier comics, Peter Parker and Clark Kent. One journalist who stands out from all the others for Sangiacomo is Ben Urich, an investigative reporter found in the *Front Line* series, as well as *Daredevil* and *Spider-Man* comics. Urich is a character that writer Brian Michael Bendis bases on Sangiacomo through conversations the two have had about the profession. "Brian understands what reporters do," Sangiacomo said (Knight, 2009). Yet Urich is also not the most ethical or even, at times, professional journalist in the comic books.

This thesis will use textual analysis to look at what kind of categories *Daredevil* writers use to portray Urich and other journalists and what kind of image of the journalist they project, as a result. *Daredevil* comics provide an array of possible categories of the journalist: the pack reporter, the unethical editor, the incompetent journalist, the journalist seeking fame and fortune, the journalist who pursues the field as a backup plan, the journalist with a conflict of interest, the journalist as exceptionally elite and the journalist as devoted and fearless. The categories range from negative connotations to positive ones, with some categories such as the pack reporter appearing in issues from the 1960s up to the current issues. In addition, journalism itself is seen through a number of categories as the times change, going from print, television and radio news serving as ubiquitous informers to newspapers depicted as a fledgling craft. A literature review will look at past research on comic books, *Daredevil*, journalists in comic books, the image of the journalist in popular culture, journalism history and public perception of the press.

Table 1: Classification of depictions of journalism in *Daredevil* comics

Category of journalism	Description of category	Issues in which category is found
Incompetent journalism	Journalists show lack of skill in headlining, reporting or composing a story, newspapers shown with these elements	Daredevil (volume one): 9, 10, 16, 24, 30, 42, 45, 47, 163, 165, 169, 254 Daredevil (volume two): 5, 6, 9, 13, 20, 26, 61, 64, 65, 68, 71, 76, 80, 88, 102 Daredevil (volume three): 1, 2, 4, 6
The pack reporter	Chases around, yells at and harasses subjects of stories	Daredevil (volume one): 19, 48, 175 Daredevil (volume two): 3, 13, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 40, 44, 61, 65, 66, 68, 70, 78, 81, 93, 94 Daredevil (volume three): 1
The unethical publisher	Will print whatever sells the most papers or whatever furthers agenda against someone	Daredevil (volume one): 16, 17, 132, 163 Daredevil (volume two): 8, 21, 22, 25, 84
The journalist as unethical, with a conflict of interest or dreams of fame and fortune	Lets friendship or hatred toward subject create internal bias or thinks more of fame and prizes won from story than duty	Daredevil (volume one): 16, 27, 44, 164, 178, 180 Daredevil (volume two): 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 38, 42, 57, 58, 59, 61, 65, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 106, 111
The crusading journalist	Journalist with a goal to bring down an institution	Daredevil (volume one): 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233 Daredevil (volume two): 16, 17, 18, 19, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87
The expert, fearless, devoted journalist	Shows skill above others in investigating, interviewing, writing	Daredevil (volume one): 164, 173, 174, 178 Daredevil (volume two): 16, 17, 18, 19, 56, 57, 76, 91, 512
The journalist as superior public servant	Holds people accountable when courts or police do not	Daredevil (volume one): 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233 Daredevil (volume two): 16, 17, 18, 19
Journalism as ubiquitous informer	Everyone gets their information from print, television, radio news	Daredevil (volume one): 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 33, 37, 38, 40, 43, 45, 53, 131, 166, 174, 177, 181, 183, 217, 222, 226, 262, 265 Daredevil (volume two): 1, 4, 5, 14, 30, 31, 38, 41, 42, 46, 50, 59, 69, 73, 74, 77, 78, 84, 87, 92, 93, 114, 119 Daredevil (volume three): 4

## Literature Review

### *Public perception of journalists*

How do journalists gain their caricature that varies from braggadocios who drink constantly and invade privacy for a scoop to beautiful female reporters who fall in love with their subjects to enterprising male heroes who fight for the common man and uncover scandal and intrigue? How do we reconcile these disparate ideas about journalists in the public consciousness into the one overarching idea that journalists are engaged in one of the least popular professions? Perhaps it's best to first consider how journalists view their own profession. With their firsthand knowledge of the day-to-day workings of the profession, they are most familiar with what happens and what it means to be a journalist. The nonprofit research firm Public Agenda conducted a poll, asking *Columbia Journalism Review's* panel of high-level editors, "if your son or daughter approached you for career advice, would you recommend or discourage journalism as a life's work? And what reasons would you offer?" (Hickey, 1999). These questions are especially relevant as they mandate that these veteran editors give their truest analysis of the profession, taking in both the positives (noble watchdog role, opportunity for writers, seeing the world) with the negatives (low pay, irregular hours, low public esteem). Ninety-one people filled out the questionnaire, with the demographics separating out into 57 percent working in newspapers, 12 percent in television, 11 percent on magazines and 7 percent in radio, with 11 percent saying "other" (Hickey, 1999).

Despite the middleground evidence for and against journalism, 68 percent endorsed the profession for their children, while only 19 percent advised doing something else and two percent were in the middle. Most tellingly, one journalist wrote in, "It is important work. It is honorable work. It is noble work. It is fun." This strikes at the heart of one of the prevailing

themes in journalistic films – the idea of journalist as noble watchdog. It’s also remarkable that in the context of their children’s financial stability – which is usually of importance to parents – journalists still advocate universally for their profession.

So that is how journalists see themselves, but how does the public see journalists?

Becker et. al., looked at public perception of the press during Watergate, a period considered one of the golden eras of journalism (Becker et. al., 1978). A 1970 CBS poll said only 42 percent of people felt that the media should report a story in peacetime even if the government called such reporting harmful. A 1973 Gallup poll said 39 percent of people had “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence and respect for newspapers. According to a Harris poll, only 24 percent had confidence in the press in 1976. (Becker et. al., 1978). Louis Harris analyzed Harris Survey results of confidence in journalists from years in the late 1960s to the early 1980s (Harris, 1984). In 1984, this time period was considered one of the lowest in history for public perception of the press, in the wake of the Reagan administration’s media ban during the invasion of Grenada. Harris polls of general confidence in journalists slipped to 14 percent in late 1982. Then in early 1983, it reached 13.7 percent.

But Harris refuted this by saying that, by October 1983, confidence grew to 19 percent (Harris, 1984). Then in early December, the Harris Survey polled 1,249 adults about how they felt about the exclusion of the press from Grenada. 65 percent thought that at least some reporters should have gone to Grenada. 63 percent thought that the president or the military could and might be tempted not to report mistakes or lives lost, due to the lack of checks by the news media. Furthermore, 83 percent said the public had a right to know in America, especially when the military was involved. 52 percent rejected that the media were prying into too many

things and that it was good they were kept out of Grenada. Finally, 53 percent believed that the county was better if it had full Vietnam War coverage in print and television.

So this tells us that perhaps the view of journalists in the wake of the Grenada ban was skewed greatly. Perhaps 1984 was not a poor period for public perception of journalists, despite the falls from 1970s figures. Gronke and Cook note that Los Angeles Times polls in 1981 and 1985 revealed that respondents thought journalists as more honest and fair than business, organized labor and government (Gronke and Cook, 2007). But by the late 1990s, according to Pew Research Center for the People and the Press surveys, the public was more likely to say “the news media gets in the way of society solving its problems” and news organizations “generally don’t care about what they report on” and “try to cover up their mistakes” (Gronke and Cook, 2007). And unlike the public’s attitude in the wake of the Grenada ban, the public was more likely to advocate government intervention to restrain the press’ power now (Gronke and Cook, 2007). Indeed, results from a 1996 Harris poll showed that majorities were ready to ease libel laws, advocate the government force journalists to obtain a license to practice and have the government levy fines when journalists make mistakes or do not provide both sides to an issue. These are dangerous sentiments as they severely undercut the journalist’s ability to perform his or her job and promote a fear of publishing on certain issues due to potential punishment.

But journalism is one of those industries that, due to its ubiquitous nature, everyone has an opinion about. So one hears others’ opinions on journalists more frequently. How does that opinion compare to opinions about other professions? Harris put that into context, looking at the Harris Survey’s October 1983 survey. It showed that only 18 percent had a “great deal of confidence” in business, 22 percent showed confidence in organized religion and 20 percent showed it in Congress. But the General Social Survey takes yearly polls of public confidence in

institutions, and public confidence in the press has had the steepest decline over the time period of 1973-2004 (Gronke and Cook, 2007). And the press is the only institution that has shown constant declines over the time period, while the others have had statistically significant increases and decreases. So it is apparent from the data that the public's low perception of media as a whole is not a myth, and that constant declining perception is most extreme with the media.

In applying this research to everyday journalists' abilities to do their jobs in interviewing people, it is important to consider that research shows that people trust their local television stations and newspapers more than the monolithic term of "the news media" (Gronke and Cook, 2007). Consistently poll results show people thinking badly about "the media" or "journalists" as a whole, yet the public regularly reports favorably, above 80 percent, for the local newspaper, the local television news and even the network television news, according to Pew Research Center results (Gronke and Cook, 2007). This suggests that there is a large gap between the public's opinion of news media that they regularly encounter firsthand and the idea of the institution as a whole. So while local journalists could struggle in first establishing a relationship with a source because of the stigma of "journalists" or "the media," local journalists could succeed at their jobs by having favorable firsthand experiences with sources or by association with the favorable reputation of the local newspaper.

Becker et. al., concluded that, following Watergate, the principal factors that led to low support for the press were support of Richard Nixon, political party affiliation and ideology (Becker et. al., 1978). But this study had narrow scope in terms of potential variables that affect press perception and time period studied. Analyzing the GSS data, Gronke and Cook came to the conclusion that age, education and income all serve as major predictors for low confidence in the press. "It appears that for the heaviest consumers of the news (the more educated, the better-off,

older respondents), we have clear evidence that familiarity with the news product breeds a lack of confidence (if not contempt) with the press as an institution” (Gronke and Cook, 2007). But what news are these people consuming? According to other data, people are widely content with local news sources, so is this a product of familiarity with national news sources like the much-maligned perceived biases of CNN and Fox News?

### *Journalism history*

In his book, *Journalism at the End of the American Century, 1965-Present*, James Brian McPherson suggests that the Vietnam War was the turning point in the public opinion of the press and how it operated (McPherson, 2006). Thanks to Vietnam, the Watergate scandal and other factors, Americans felt they needed the press for the current, up-to-date news. The exaggerations of what led to the Vietnam War, as well as the Watergate scandal itself, made Americans certain they needed the watchdog of the press for the scandals to come to light and to see firsthand the imagery of the Vietnam War to decide for themselves about the conflict.

McPherson suggests that, oddly enough, as news became more immediate, visual and ubiquitous with the early success of television news, the depth of the reporting and the public's understanding of key issues diminished (McPherson, 2006). Ironically as the press pointed out government inaccuracies and aided a growing public opinion that the government was to be distrusted, eventually the press was yet another institution that the public did not trust.

As the years passed, McPherson notes the growing trend toward consumer-oriented news (McPherson, 2006). News outlets turned to civic journalism and used focus groups to address citizens' concerns. Eventually international news, especially that of little direct importance to Americans, diminished. Though business journalism was important, journalists failed to note the

warning signs behind the WorldCom and Enron scandals, even despite the ties to the presidential campaign of George W. Bush. Ironically, in an age where civic journalism was born, celebrity journalism proliferated, sharing little of the same interests with civic journalism. "As the world became more complex, much of the news became more simplistic. Often it focused on dramatic stories of crime, sex, and celebrity, typically stories of little relevance to most people's lives. Some of those stories sparked feeding frenzies among journalistic packs" (McPherson, 2006)

Many dramatic changes in the news industry since 1965 centered on new technology or new innovations. Television news changed the way people wanted their news, especially with the telecast of the horrors of the Vietnam War (McPherson, 2006). Newspapers had to adapt to an environment where television news could broadcast the story before the next day's headline. The debut of CNN in 1980 and the 24-hour news cycle further increased access to news with immediacy. The Internet changed things again a little more than a decade later. Now newspapers and television both had to adapt, changing style and content.

The race and gender of the journalists changed with the Vietnam War era, as well (McPherson, 2006). Women, especially those who were willing to become embedded reporters in Vietnam, had opportunity to enter the journalistic workplace. African-Americans became represented among those that American viewers saw on nightly newscasts. White, male journalists still dominated, especially in management positions, but in particular, minority female journalists gained a foothold into the profession through affirmative action strategies that businesses employed. Often newspapers wanted to satisfy affirmative action needs with one new hire, making minority female journalists ideal candidates.

Even with all this innovation, McPherson still suggests that the old axiom is right: "the more things change, the more they are the same" (McPherson, 2006). He compares the Vietnam



War to the Iraq War, saying both were started from exaggerated accounts of an attack against America or a threat toward America. Both involved the French not supporting the American war effort. The media used new access and technology to cover both wars, carrying horrific images to American viewers. This seems to suggest that American news reporting will change throughout the years, with new technology and new access, adapting even to the same situations.

### *Comic books*

In *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, Bradford W. Wright calls comic books an aspect of American popular culture that is both “instantly recognizable and still so poorly understood” (Wright, 2001). This stems from the marginalization of the medium, the perception of comic books as an art form for children only. This runs contrary to the increasing maturity of comic books from their origin in the 1930s to the college-age audiences of Marvel Comics in the 1960s to the contemporary direct market audience of older collectors and fanatics. Even in 1983, Max J. Skidmore and Joey Skidmore said the comics of that time had art quality that “increased immeasurably” since the Golden Age of comics in the late 1930s and 1940s (Skidmore, 1983). They also said the writing had gotten “considerably more complex.” Series like *Maus* and *The Dark Knight Returns* have earned nearly universal critical acclaim under the term “graphic novels.” Writer Alan Moore and artist Dave Gibbons’ 1986 maxi-series *Watchmen* earned a spot in *Time* magazine’s 100 best English-language novels from 1923 to the present. In the 2012 comics world, most DC Comics have the rating of “T” for teenager, and a small, separate DC Comics kids line called Johnny DC provides comics specifically for the audience of children. Virginia W. Gerde and R. Spencer Foster report that the

average age of comics readers in 2005 was 24 years old, and the U.S. estimated overall market value for comic books in 2005 was between \$400 million and \$450 million (Gerde, 2008).

But because of the negative stigma, Wright stresses that comic books as a primary source in research are neglected, particularly in a historical context (Wright, 2001). He contends that cultural historians would benefit from comics as primary sources because, due to their lowbrow status, comic creators have been free to experiment, without the expectations of the mainstream. Going further, Wright said comic books are useful for historians to test how pervasive assumptions have been about American culture throughout history, such as beliefs about Communists, the New Deal or the Vietnam War. Many read *X-Men*, created in 1963, as a parable for the topic of racism and civil rights, particularly considering it was created during the civil rights movement of the 1960s (Trushell, 2004). Gerde and Foster said comic books reflect culture to such an extent that they require readers keep up with current events, citing a 2001 issue of *Amazing Spider-Man* that addressed the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks (Gerde, 2008). They said comic books reflect “norms and expectations of social, political and economic institutions” (Gerde, 2008). Salvatore Mondello, in 1976, called *The Amazing Spider-Man* “a historical document that reflects three periods from our recent past” (Mondello, 1976). From 1962 to 1967, the era was about Cold War diplomacy and personal gratification. From 1967 to 1973, Spider-Man concerned himself with issues confronting American society. And from 1973 to the time of the article, Spider-Man grew weary of crusading. Mondello argued that each era has Spider-Man mirroring the opinion of the American public.

Jason Bainbridge said that most people think comic book superheroes do not call for significant academic attention (Bainbridge, 2007). And when people do think such attention is warranted, they usually view comic books strictly as an artform, rather than looking for social or

legal commentary. Yet comics are rife with the latter. Russell W. Belk turned toward comic books to analyze frames of wealth, quoting sociologists and psychologists about the power of literature as source material about people and culture (Belk, 1987). Sociologist Richard Sennett said, “One can learn more about the complexity of motives and mutual perception from a reasonably good novel than from a ‘solid’ piece of social science research” (Belk, 1987). Belk said comics are a good primary source for analysis of frames because the long-running nature of some comic series – he analyzed four comic books that each shared at least 20 years of history – allows for longitudinal study of temporal changes in the frames studied. He suggested that comic books are both a cause and a reflection of culture. Moreover, Wright suggested that, rather than trying to find effects of comic book reading on readers, it is best to simply analyze the text as entertainment with some themes that most audiences will not miss (Wright, 2001). He said, “Ten individuals can read a comic book, watch a movie or listen to a song and come away with ten completely different impressions, interpretations and influences” (Wright, 2001).

In addition, specifying comic book is important because comic strips are syndicated in newspapers and sold to adult audiences, while comic books are sold alone and aimed toward a younger audience than newspapers, which, in turn, have distinguished each as separate artforms (Wright, 2001). Plus analyzing superhero comics, in particular, is beneficial. Though comic books have explored a wide range of genres – from romance to horror to western and more – comics have had their greatest impact on American culture in the form of superheroes. The proliferation of comic book superhero movies in the 1990s and, in particular, the 2000s only underscore superheroes’ long-lasting appeal. Taking into account sales and longevity, studying superhero comics, in particular, distills the most potential out of comic book research. Gerde and Foster suggest using comic books to teach about a variety of topics, including employee issues,

gender equity and the media. They suggest looking at the ethics and newspaper strategies behind *The Daily Planet* from the pages of *Superman* comics and *The Daily Bugle* from *Spider-Man*, *Daredevil* and other assorted comics.

American comic books have tackled a number of different issues over the years. *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* touched on racism, greed, destruction of the environment and drug use in the 1970s. More recently, *Green Lantern* tackled gay hate crime and *Green Arrow* depicted a supporting character with HIV. In 2010, the pages of *Superman*, in the "Grounded" storyline, show the superhero walking across the country and dealing with local social issues. Comics have also touched on gun control, poverty and alcohol use (Palmer-Mehta, et. al., 2005). In essence, comics, just like other forms of media, have responded to the world around them and presented many of the major social issues from a variety of perspectives.

This reflection of the times is not recent and is not restricted to such overt portrayals as plots about drug abuse. The very origins of some of the oldest comic book superheroes can tell us a bit about the landscape of the nation at the time of their creation (Land, et. al., 1988). Created in the late 1930s, Superman represents the immigrant coming to America and the American Dream achieved to the fullest possibilities. Captain America, a hero made for and created during World War II, shows the nation's war fervor and nationalism. Captain America was just an ordinary soldier, but the Super Soldier formula turned him into an extraordinary superhero, so essentially every American soldier has the possibilities of a Captain America inside (Land, et. al, 1988). Jeffrey Land and Patrick Trimble present the idea that, as America changes, so, too, do its comic book superheroes. Marvel heroes created in the 1960s, such as Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four, captured readers primarily because they weren't Supermen. In their first incarnations, Spider-Man was just a teenager, and the Fantastic Four was a family that constantly

argued. They had problems and flaws and, therefore, were relevant. With Superman's late 1980s reboot of the character, his origin story was changed, and some of his powers were curtailed, essentially giving him more fallibility. Batman's immense popularity today, no doubt, partially comes from having two moneymaking movie franchises since 1989 but also from the idea that Batman comes across as the most realistic vigilante of them all, the superhero with no super powers. And just as main characters themselves have evolved over the years, so, too, has the journalistic environment comics must recreate in order to look current.

### *Journalists in comic books*

The two most famous examples of journalists in comic books are Clark Kent (a.k.a. Superman) and Peter Parker (a.k.a. Spider-Man), but neither finds a place among the medium's most ethical or believable journalists. From the very beginning of publication, Superman thought of the newspaper as simply a convenient way to keep tabs on signs of trouble (Kilmer, 2010). Plus he is always writing stories about himself, as Superman, a clear conflict of interest. Sangiacomo said he would worry that it would prove a conflict of interest in the other direction more often, with Superman underemphasizing himself in stories (Knight, 2009).

The pages of *Ultimate Spider-Man*, a modern retelling of Spider-Man's origin, show Parker thinking of the newsroom as a cool place to work but ultimately just a convenient spot for first-responders. In the title, he seems to have no real interest in journalism. Sangiacomo calls Parker not a journalist but an opportunist (Knight, 2009). Of course, the same conflict of interest exists with Spider-Man, since his main source of material is taking photographs of himself, as Spider-Man, yet Sangiacomo wonders how he is able to take the photographs of himself, logistically, in action. Going further, Sangiacomo says, "He's (Parker's) never demonstrated any

kind of journalistic skill or even knowledge of the profession" (Knight, 2009). This lack of interest from the protagonist essentially tells readers to disregard the profession as something to be taken seriously.

*Spider-Man* comics depict some of the worst journalism in the medium, centered in the characterization of J. Jonah Jameson, publisher of the *Daily Bugle* newspaper and for a time, *Now* magazine. From the beginning, Jameson violated the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics by accepting photographs from Parker without questioning how he got them. Furthermore, Parker insists on having the credit for the photos go to a *Now* magazine staff photographer, and Jameson is fine with it (Kilmer, 2010). Jameson is an example of the editor with a vendetta and with no real interest for the truth. He only cares about the public interest when it means economic prosperity. Ironically, Jameson is surrounded by more fair and responsible journalists like *Daily Bugle* city editor Joe "Robbie" Robertson (Kilmer, 2010).

In contrast, Marvel's *Civil War: Front Line* mini-series portrays two different journalists, Ben Urich and Sally Floyd, as heroes (Stevens, 2009). A reporting veteran from the *Daily Bugle*, Urich is initially cautiously optimistic about the events of the series. Floyd, a young reporter working for *The Alternative*, is cynical and talks about bringing down a conspiracy. Over the course of the story, thanks to both journalists talking to each other regularly, they not only put together more of the story than their journalistic colleagues, but they also end up essentially switching positions. Urich begins to question the status quo, while Floyd is more critical of the radicals. It shows two journalists as open-minded, willing to see the story from all angles, while also doggedly pursuing and investigating the matter. They end up quitting their respective publications and starting up their own online publication called *frontlines.com*. Stevens calls the

mini-series a critique of journalism in a post-9/11 world, much more ambitious and sophisticated journalism fare than being a superhero's double life.

### *Journalists in popular culture*

In television, Elizabeth A. Skewes says the journalistic pack are trying to shout over everyone else to get their questions answered at press briefing rooms, courtrooms and crime scenes (Skewes, 2009). They find the most exciting part of the story and ask questions about it, in order to get a better story. She points out that, even when journalists serve as positive protagonists, they can come off as unethical. In 2000-2001's NBC show *Deadline*, the main character is a columnist that does not really care about what is the truth and will "do anything for the story" (Skewes, 2009). His editor in that show is romantically seeing the mayor, a clear conflict of interest.

Skewes' study on presidential candidates and the press in *The West Wing* shows that that series departs from the journalistic norm in more subtle ways. The show's depiction of a presidential campaign comes off as "more Hollywood than reality" because of presidential candidate Matt Santos' willingness, late in the campaign, to meet with reporters (Skewes, 2009). He gives question-and-answer sessions with the press after every speech and meets with the traveling press five times a day. He also gives one-on-one interviews with the *Boston Globe* and the *Chicago Tribune*, as part of a series of personal interviews. In reality, Skewes says, this only happens with candidates who are not front-runners, early in the election. George W. Bush never hung out with the reporters as the incumbent in 2004. The other candidate, Arnold Vinick, chats with reporters casually and appears himself on *Hardball* with Chris Matthews (Skewes, 2009). In

reality, a strategist would appear on such a show, with the actual candidate appearing on a softer talk show like *The Tonight Show*.

But the most skewed aspect of the journalistic portrayal in *The West Wing* is that the show paints the two presidential candidates as heroes and champions of political discourse when, in reality, presidential candidates do not go out of their way to stand up for these ideals (Skewes, 2009). The show blames inadequate election journalism on campaign strategists and journalists, who ask questions related to canceled lunches and polls, rather than the big issues. In reality, journalists cover those big issues early in the election, when most people are not giving the election serious thought yet. And as it gets closer and closer to Election Day, with campaigns more and more limiting access to their candidates, journalists are forced to go to polls and strategy articles.

Essentially, journalists are used as plot devices in *The West Wing* to move along the action and impart news. This depiction is not new. A content analysis of 1987 prime time television programs found one-fourth of the depictions of journalists were of a central character (Stone, et. al., 1990). According to the study, certain occupations, like journalism, tend to be overemphasized on television because of the high drama involved. "Themes on dramatic prime-time television are likely to be unrealistic, yet heavy viewers are likely to accept occupational themes television provides" (Stone, et. al., 1990). The study calls this "worrisome at best" because journalists in 1987 television were both highly visible and depicted somewhat negatively, particularly newspaper journalists.

The children's television series *Sesame Street* straddles the line between negative and positive portrayal of journalists over the years. Ashley Ragovin targeted the image of the journalist in *Sesame Street*, primarily because its target audience is three to five year olds



(Ragovin, 2010). While the show portrayed some negative portrayals of journalists, largely for comedy purposes, such as "the pack reporter, the curmudgeon and renegade reporter," Ragovin found that *Sesame Street* largely had a positive image of the journalist, which contrasts with other portrayals (Ragovin, 2010). In fact, she said that *Sesame Street* helps to counteract negative attitudes created by the media in children. Children rely on predictability and routine, but the news reports on the polar opposite of that with the news of the bizarre, so *Sesame Street*, in its educational function, presents a routine "News Flash" segment. It teaches children rudimentary skills like counting, while also fostering positive ideas of the news for the future generation. In particular, in recent years, *Sesame Street* has even pointed out bad reporting in Oscar the Grouch's spoof of a 24-hour cable news network, with real-life journalists, like Anderson Cooper, serving as a reliable foil.

Daxton Stewart looks specifically at how negative portrayals of journalists in media might affect readers by analyzing the responses of *Harry Potter* readers in college classes made up largely of freshmen (Stewart, 2010). Even after isolating specifically those students who read it in adolescence and the specific *Harry Potter* books later on in the series, which portrayed journalism in a negative light, the study found no link between negative portrayals of journalists and a decreased perceived perception of journalists among the students. However, the survey was limited in that it only looked at this demographic at this college; it only used a survey that talked about journalists in broad terms; and other factors, no doubt, also co-mingled and affected the students' view of journalists. The study found that readers seemed to think more positively of journalists than non-readers, but that could also be due to the *Harry Potter* readers being fans of reading in general and perhaps reading a newspaper regularly.

Matthew Ehrlich's taught a class on journalists in film (Ehrlich, 1996). The class had 10 undergraduate journalism majors – five print and five broadcast, seven female and three male. It was an elective class that met twice a week, with students watching a film one class period and students discussing them during the other class period. The films ranged in age and journalist perception. Movies were shown chronologically and included: *The Front Page* (1931), *Nothing Sacred* (1937), *His Girl Friday* (1940), *Meet John Doe* (1941), *Call Northside 777* (1948), *Ace in the Hole* (1951), *Deadline USA* (1952), *Teacher's Pet* (1958), *Medium Cool* (1969), *All the President's Men* (1976), *Network* (1976), *The China Syndrome* (1979), *Absence of Malice* (1981), *Under Fire* (1983), *Broadcast News* (1987) and *The Paper* (1994).

Students were required to write six papers for their grades (Ehrlich, 1996). They were generally open-ended assignments dealing with films, such as comparing *All the President's Men* with *Medium Cool*. Students were asked which portrayed a “more truthful and honest portrayal of the news medium,” using assigned readings about *Medium Cool* and *All the President's Men*. Students were also asked to address journalistic issues as portrayed by films – regarding topics like “objectivity and subjectivity, cynicism and idealism, home and work, social justice and corporate profit.” They also looked at journalistic movie genre conventions and stereotypes such as “broadcast news is always portrayed more negatively than print news” or “women are portrayed more positively over time.” The sixth and final paper allowed students to choose the topic based on one of the last films screened (Ehrlich, 1996). Particularly of interest, Ehrlich, as the instructor, told the students that it did not matter whether he agreed with the content of the paper, just as long as they “clearly and forcefully” made their arguments. As a result, the final paper varied students' responses quite a bit. Most students chose to write about the portrayal of women journalists, since all four of the final pictures featured female protagonists.

But even on the same issue, student opinion dramatically contrasted (Ehrlich, 1996). In fact, student opinion varied even when writing about the same topic on the same film. One student argued that the last films showed that the “mold of the hot-headed girl reporter leaving the newsroom to find true love and happiness as a housewife has finally been shattered” (Ehrlich, 1996). Another student, writing on the same subject, disagreed completely, saying, female characters “seeking to reconcile their personal and private lives have almost always (sacrificed) one over the other” and “the old stereotypes of incompetent, incapable, unstable female reporters (are) remarkable in their staying power” (Ehrlich, 1996). So it is possible that people watching the same movies and even addressing the same questions can come up with completely opposite interpretations, but it is important to remember these are journalism students evaluating these films. Even in their infancy in the industry, journalism students have an insider’s perspective on the industry, and therefore, were perhaps more cognizant of films’ sometimes negative portrayal of journalists or more aware of the negative public perception of journalists and seeking to fight against that stereotype. Results could prove much different when research participants have no prior experience in journalism.

### *Daredevil*

As part of a long string of new Marvel Comics titles by writer Stan Lee and various artistic collaborators, *Daredevil* debuted in 1964, written by Lee and drawn by Bill Everett (Lee, 1964). From Hell’s Kitchen, New York, young Matt Murdock pushes an elderly man out of the collision course with a runaway truck, but the truck is carrying large amounts of radioactive waste. The waste blinds him but enhances all of his other senses to a superhuman degree. Despite the accident, he continues his life, completing martial arts training and studying at Columbia

University Law School. But when Murdock's father, boxer Battlin' Jack Murdock, is murdered for not throwing a fight, Murdock dons the identity of Daredevil to hunt down his father's killers. From here, he goes into full-time crimefighting as the swashbuckling, red-garbed superhero, even after graduating law school and setting up a law practice with best friend Franklin "Foggy" Nelson.

In the book *Son of Origin of Marvel Comics*, Lee, the creator of Spider-Man, X-Men and virtually every major Marvel superhero property, called Daredevil his favorite because of the challenge his creation presented (Lee, 1975). Up until 1964, Lee said that all his creations had a weakness, but the emphasis was on the hero's power. Lee wanted to make a hero where his distinguishing characteristic was his weakness. Inspired by mystery stories he read as a child about a blind detective named Duncan Maclain, Lee created the blind superhero Daredevil. Lee decided to take the knowledge that blind people's other senses become better and amplify it, staging an accident that would take away Daredevil's blindness but give him much more amplified other features. Unlike other heroes, Daredevil would not even possess super strength. His cunning would come from his amplified senses.

Lee says Daredevil stands out because of all the Marvel heroes, Daredevil and his supporting cast have changed the most often and most steadily (Lee, 1975). Indeed, the comic began as a means for Lee to coax artist Everett back into drawing. But Daredevil had several artists, including Wally Wood and John Romita, before the comic settled on its first signature artist, Gene Colan. Underlining the differences, Lee called Colan's style completely different from that of Everett. In the same way, Daredevil had completely changed his costume design before reaching issue 10, going from yellow and black tights to a red suit.

Bainbridge viewed Daredevil as an example of a cross between the pre-modern idea of law, catching criminals and lacking rationality, with the modern idea of law, due process and rational thinking (Bainbridge, 2007). He pointed to Daredevil's unique secret identity of a lawyer, casting Murdock as a man who champions the legal system by day and commits extralegal activities of vigilantism by night. Despite confrontation from The Punisher, who takes the law into his own hand and kills those he deems guilty, Daredevil maintains his view of the justice of the legal system, despite his vigilante nature. Showcasing the literary merit of *Daredevil*, Tim Blackmore extensively compared writer Frank Miller's *Daredevil: Born Again* story arc with Sophocles' classic tragedy *Oedipus Tyrannus* (Blackmore).

Like its Marvel Comics brethren, *Daredevil* reflects the times. In one 1970 story, a Black Panthers-like group attacks a black Vietnam War veteran after accusing him of taking part in a "white man's war" (Wright, 2001). Another *Daredevil* story from 1970 mirrored the Chicago Seven conspiracy trial, with the introduction of a new villain called the Tribune, who targeted draft dodgers and anti-war protesters. Miller's *Daredevil: Born Again* was set in the urban jungle of 1985 New York and showcased a decaying American Dream (Blackmore). During the narrative, the story arc alludes to the 1984 Bernard Goetz New York subway incident.

## Methods

This thesis will analyze the depiction of journalists, particularly Ulrich, in the *Daredevil* comic book series. Created in 1964, the *Daredevil* comic book series has produced 521 issues, as of February 2012. This study will analyze 257 of those issues, 250 issues that are available from the Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited subscription service, priced at \$9.99 monthly or \$59.88 yearly, and seven issues that uniquely come from a personal collection, priced at \$2.99 each. The comics analyzed include *Daredevil*, volume one, issues 1-50, 52, 53, 81, 102, 131-132, 146, 158-191, 215-217, 219-222, 225-233, 253-257, 259-263 and 265. The study also includes *Daredevil*, volume two, issues 1-119 and 500-512. Note that after the publication of volume two, issue 119, Marvel Comics reestablished the original numbering by adding up the final number of the first volume with the 119 issues from the second volume to get the new numbering. Finally, the study includes *Daredevil*, volume three, issues 1-7. Marvel staggers adding classic comics to its subscription service, and the other issues have not been added at the time of this research. They also roughly correspond with which issues have been previously collected in earlier trade paperbacks, leaving previously uncollected issues largely absent.

The only major missing chunk of *Daredevil* comic books is from the 1970s, but the subscription service does include some *Daredevil* stories from the 1970s involving journalists, providing an outlook on that decade. Also supporting character and journalist Ben Ulrich did not first appear in the series until *Daredevil* volume one, issue 153, published July 1978. Thus, many of the missing issues in this study are before Ulrich's introduction into the comic book. Like other comic titles on the service, the *Daredevil* issue availability is connected to popularity of the creators and stories involved, as well as seeing the historical beginnings of the characters. This is why the service contains every story written by iconic writer Frank Miller, as well as the first 50

issues of the series' history by the character's creator Stan Lee and other artists. The service archives every issue since 1998, chronicling the stories of popular writers Kevin Smith, Brian Michael Bendis and Ed Brubaker, among others. Also the goal of the service is not to provide a comprehensive census of every issue in a comic book title but to feature a "broad range of characters" and "favorite titles" (About Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited). In that respect, this study will also analyze the same. *Daredevil* was chosen specifically because Daredevil is one of the two comic book characters with whom Ulrich regularly interacts, and Bendis, who regularly has spoken with a journalist about his work, is the writer of many of the issues from the 2000s.

In his notes on sources, in *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, Bradford W. Wright cites William W. Savage Jr.'s words on the difficulty of finding sources for comic book research in Savage's book *Comic Book and America, 1945-1954*. Wright says sources have improved since then, noting, some university libraries have collections of around 10,000 issues. But he might mean sources for historical research on comic books as a medium, not a complete listing for one specific title. The collection that Wright cites as the best – the Comic Art Collection at Michigan State University with more than 100,000 comic books – even lacks many issues of *Daredevil*, negating it as a viable avenue as a source for this research.

Wright's other main advice is to buy back issues of comic books at a local comic book store, if university library collections fail to provide comprehensive sources. Unfortunately, due to cost and availability issues, this was also not a viable option for this research. The Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited subscription service provided a cost-effective way to analyze a crosssection of Daredevil comics. The most available comics are spread out over different decades – the 1960s, 1980s and 2000s. Most importantly, the most classic and popular issues by the most famous *Daredevil* creators are all included, adding relevance to the research. Many of

these are the issues that comic book fans will buy in reprinted collections for years to come, while a random, uncollected *Daredevil* issue from the 1990s may have less of an impact on how people might view journalists from reading *Daredevil* comics today. Plus, some of the *Daredevil* issues not included at the time of the research are doubtful to receive the increased exposure of addition to the service. Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited has existed since 2007, and some of the issues have still not been included, while the service prioritizes adding newer, more in-demand issues to the service.





Figure 1: The cover of *Daredevil* volume one, issue eight depicts a newspaper in the corner. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

*The first eight issues of Daredevil*

*The ubiquity of newspapers in Daredevil, volume one, 1-8*

Since the supporting character of Ben Urich was not created until the 1970s, much of the appearance of journalists and journalism in the *Daredevil* comics of the 1960s happened in the background, but references are frequent enough to suggest a different, more positive mindset toward journalism in that era. Characters listen to radio news, watch television news and read newspaper voraciously (Lee, 1964). Newspapers are everywhere in the comic. Newspapers even adorn the bottom corners of the covers of issues seven and eight. Newspapers appear frequently in the stories themselves, as if to legitimize the newsworthiness of story events. In issue six, Matt Murdock even has the news on a small television set at work. In issue seven, Murdock, Foggy Nelson and secretary Karen Page are all huddled around a television set hearing about the news. Perhaps the biggest departure from the modern day, Murdock is listening to radio news at work, as well as in his leisure time while working out, such as in *Daredevil* issue eight. In fact, in issue seven, when Nelson offers to read the newspaper for the blind Murdock, in order to hide his powers of enhanced senses, Murdock insists he has already listened to the radio news, a perfect excuse in the world of 1960s *Daredevil*. With the marginalization of radio news, it would not be as believable an excuse today.

The media are depicted as a strong source of information for all the characters in *Daredevil*. Continually in the first eight issues of the series, characters reference hearing something on the news or reading it in a newspaper. In a crowd surrounding Daredevil and the apprehended villain Purple Man in *Daredevil* issue four, one female bystander identifies Daredevil specifically from reading about him in the newspaper (Lee, 1964). Readers even get the idea that the newspaper came up with Daredevil's nickname, "The Man Without Fear." She says, "Look! Isn't that Daredevil? The man that newspapers refer to as being absolutely fearless?" To drive home the idea that newspaper reading is ubiquitous, a fellow bystander

confirms it for her: “That’s him, all right! This is probably the first time he’s allowed a crowd of people to get so close to him!” This suggests that newspapers get information that other people are not privy to, since these bystanders have never even seen Daredevil until now. In *Daredevil* issue five, the story actually begins with Daredevil looking in at a family watching the television news, broadcasting a story about a new villain called the Masked Matador. Daredevil references hearing “a number of reports” about the villain. Later, two men in a large truck get on a collision course with the Matador. The driver, who reads the newspaper, knows who he is, while his passenger is left in the dark. The passenger says, “Hey, who’s that costumed nut blockin’ our way?” The driver responds, “Nut nothing! Don’t you read the papers?? That’s the masked matador!” The incredulity of his speech suggests that anyone who does not read the newspapers is a member of an out-group and not the in crowd.

Readers also see newspapers’ power of forming public opinion in *Daredevil* issue six (Lee, 1964). After reports of Daredevil’s fight with Mr. Fear cast Daredevil as a potential coward, the public as a whole believes Daredevil in that role. Murdock and Page even view children playing with toys, yearning to play as Mr. Fear instead of Daredevil because of Daredevil’s status as a coward from the news. Only later, after another battle that Daredevil wins, does public opinion sway back in Daredevil’s favor.

#### *Pack journalists and incompetent journalists in Daredevil volume one, 1-8*

Readers see that sometimes what people read in the newspapers does not match up with what actually happened, but usually the media follow the public to this reversal of opinion. At the end of issue six, in a TV news broadcast plagued by passive voice, the news anchor explains the convoluted scheme of Mr. Fear, as Murdock watches (Lee, 1964). The early issues of

*Daredevil* depict journalists and journalism as negative in other ways, however. Readers see an early example of the pack reporter, mobbing the subject and doing anything to get a scoop, in *Daredevil* issue four. Photographers swarm Daredevil and the apprehended Purple Man, each saying they want Daredevil to pose for a photo, despite newspaper photography's emphasis on natural photos. One photographer goes even further than asking for a pose, saying, "How about a smile, fella? Turn more this way, will you?" This photographer wants a completely staged picture. Daredevil swings away abruptly, afraid that the crowd will close in on him, running away from the pack reporter. "I've got to get away before I'm mobbed!" he says.

In issue five, Murdock provides the headline for that day's newspaper through a single interview, showcasing the ineptitude of the newspaper involved (Lee, 1964). "MATADOR IS DAREDEVIL, CLAIMS PROMINENT N.Y. ATTORNEY!" reads the late-edition headline of *The New York Bulletin*. This displays the lack of vetting of sources or knowledge of news values on the part of the *Bulletin* staff. Nelson makes it clear for the reader why this makes no sense, saying, "What do you know about the Matador or about Daredevil either, for that matter?" Murdock merely replies, "I'm entitled to my opinion, Foggy!" Readers are left to wonder if journalists even asked the question Nelson asks here about Murdock's knowledge of either person involved. During a battle between Daredevil and the matador later in the issue, one eyewitness says, "That newspaper story was nuts! There's Daredevil fighting the Matador right before our eyes, and he's winning!" Eyewitnesses once again learn not to trust everything they read in newspapers, and while the story paints Murdock as the one embarrassed, reporters involved would be embarrassed as well.

Technical aspects of the journalistic world are not followed in these early issues of *Daredevil* either (Lee, 1964). In issue five, a newspaper headline about the Matador's robbery of

a burglar alarm company has this subhead: “MOST DARING CRIME OF THE CENTURY!” SAYS PUBLIC!” This headline is woefully sensationalist. The headline simply cites “the public” as a source, an imprecise attribution. Who is saying this quote? The quote is passive, with “says” before the word “public.” The fact that the headline even includes the word “says” goes against headline-writing etiquette. The headline should be rendered, “Public: Most daring crime of the century.” Finally using this as a subhead at all does more to celebrate the daring of the crime than it does to impartially report the news.

Likewise, in the very first issue of *Daredevil*, readers see multiple newspapers with sports headlines on the front page (Lee, 1964). Nelson runs up to Murdock, telling him that his father is on the front of the sports pages, but all the newspapers readers see look more like front pages than sports pages, with simply the name of the paper at the top. One such paper, *The Daily Chronicle*, has a headline that reads: ““KID” MURDOCK TO FACE DAVIS, NO. 2 CONTENDER!” Once again, this defies headline rules in that the journalist here used double quotes around the word “Kid,” instead of single quotes. Other headlines either have empty statements, like how a boxing match “promises thrills,” or look more like advertisements for the boxing match than an actual story. One reads almost exactly like a flyer, dictating in all capital letters when, where and what time the fight would take place. This all might come down to Lee not understanding the technicalities of journalism, which, therefore, could affect how readers view these aspects of journalism writing.

### *The ubiquity of media in Daredevil comics*

Media are ubiquitous in the world of *Daredevil* comics, and this is particularly the case for the *Daredevil* comics of the 1960s in this study. Even when the events of the issue are not

placed in America, people still reference knowledge about Daredevil from the news. In volume one, issue nine, Dr. Van Eyck says he read about Daredevil in America (Lee, 1964). Likewise, in issue 14, one policeman, while abroad, says, "Daredevil! I'd read about him in the American journals but thought they put it on a bit thick!" Conversely, in issue 25, Page learns of news abroad about Daredevil and Ka-Zar from the newspaper.

Murdock, Nelson and Page – the stars of the early *Daredevil* comics – are voracious news consumers. Issues depict Page reading the newspaper to Murdock. They listen to the radio news while at work or watch television news. Murdock even listens to the radio news while working out in issue 15 (Lee, 1964). Volume one, issue 16 is a striking example of how every character in the book gets information from an official news source. Murdock, Page and Nelson begin the story by watching television news. Later, Murdock says the radio reported Daredevil sighted in the city. The villain of the comic, the Masked Marauder, hears news of a Daredevil-Spider-Man fight from the radio news. Nelson and Page read multiple newspapers and tell Murdock how they differ in their accounts of the issue's action. Spider-Man references reading Jameson editorials in the past from *The Daily Bugle*. One issue contained six separate references to news media, and these references allude to three different media – newspapers, television news and radio news. In the very next issue, it is easy for readers to see why Jameson is so eager to get on the news within the hour because all the characters in the comic book are tuned in to the TV news (Lee, 1964). The narration even makes light of this: "Now as we switch to the headquarters of the Marauder himself, it would seem that Jonah Jameson's trendex rating among our cast of characters is slightly overwhelming" (Lee, 1964).

Daredevil constantly uses the media as a source of information vital to his crime-fighting duties. A typical issue, like issue 19, begins with Daredevil saying, "I don't know if he saw this

morning's paper yet, but I did! And the headline I read convinced me he (Nelson) mustn't leave for work alone!" Later in the issue, it is the radio news that tells Daredevil and Nelson that the villain of the issue, the Gladiator, has escaped. Likewise, in that issue, Page learns that Nelson is not Daredevil from the radio news. Daredevil so relies on the media in the book that while stranded in Europe, with the only money he has, Daredevil buys a newspaper in issue 24 (Lee, 1964). He is immediately rewarded with information on his friend Ka-Zar's whereabouts in England. Daredevil again turns to the media in the next issue when wanting to learn more about Leap Frog. He turns on the radio, hoping for radio news about him, and he hears that the Leap Frog has held up a bank.

In particular, it is radio news that informs the characters throughout the book. This could speak to the fact that Daredevil is blind, but due to his powers, the book reiterates how easily he can read newspapers, as well. And the characters watch television news on more than one occasion. But radio news is most frequently the informer. In issue 26, the Masked Marauder hears a radio bulletin of a Daredevil-Stilt-Man fight (Lee, 1964). In issue 28, Nelson and Page try to find Murdock after hearing a news report about a flying saucer. In issue 30, Dr. Don Blake hears a radio bulletin about Daredevil impersonating Thor. Murdock hears on the radio that the world's precious necklace was brought to an expo on a particular train in issue 33. Issues 37 and 38 have Dr. Doom learning news about Daredevil on two separate occasions from the radio news. In all these circumstances and more, these instances inform characters' later actions, showing the power and reach of radio news at the time.

Newspapers also appear frequently in the *Daredevil* comics of the 1960s. On multiple occasions, the newspaper headlines are shown on the cover of the issue, as if to legitimize the events inside. In issue 42, while Nelson is reading a newspaper that looks like *The New York*

*Times*, mayoral candidate Richard Raleigh is reading the paper, as well (Lee, 1964). In issue 43, readers see a copy of *The Daily Bugle*, reporting about the Captain America benefit. Issue 45 depicts two different people reading the newspaper in the subway, with shots of the newspaper headlines showcasing the events of the story. Issue 40 even has narration to readers that implies that everyone reads the newspaper. The panels show Nelson doing a television interview on his candidacy for district attorney, but the story cuts away, using this narration: "But since we can read all about Candidate Nelson's platform in our local newspapers, let's turn once again to the time beyond our time" (Lee, 1964).

These instances showcasing journalism's ubiquity are not missing from later *Daredevil* comics, but they are not as frequent. Issue 177 has a moment that also implies that everyone reads newspapers. When Jameson asks Nelson if he read today's *Daily Bugle*, he says he's a *New York Times* reader, implying that everyone reads a specific newspaper daily (Miller, 1981). In volume two, issue 119, when Daredevil does not know the news from the newspapers that The Owl broke out of prison, a police detective asks, incredulously, where have you been (Brubaker, 2006). It is hearing the radio news in a cab that alerts Daredevil to trouble in volume one, issue 166 (McKenzie, 1979). Murdock hears of Melvin Potter's relocation from the radio news in issue 174, and the radio tells Daredevil that Bullseye escaped in issue 181 (Miller, 1981).

Characters in *Daredevil* also more overtly discuss the reach of media. In *Daredevil* volume one, issue 178, Cherryh decides to sue *The Daily Bugle* for Ulrich's story connecting him to criminal interests (Miller, 1981). He sues *The Daily Bugle* for \$5 million as a symbol, one dollar for every reader the *Bugle* gets, alluding to the damage the story has caused him. In *Daredevil*: "Born Again," Jameson alludes to the power of *The Daily Bugle* because of its readership (Miller, 1986).



In *Daredevil* comics of the 2000s, on many occasions, the power and reach of newspapers shows. In volume two, issue 31, Silke holds up a *Daily Bugle* with the headline, "KINGPIN DEAD," and simply says, "And now everyone in the city knows" (Bendis, 2001). The implication is that everyone in the city reads *The Daily Bugle*, and this is a story from the 2000s, in the midst of newspapers' decline. But some stories are said to have far greater reach in the comic book than just one city. In the aftermath of *The Daily Globe* tabloid leaking his secret identity, Daredevil says in issue 38 that "half the world" knows he is Daredevil (Bendis, 2001). This is further illustrated when Kingpin says in issue 50 that the first thing he read after regaining his eyesight was the paper in Sweden. The news about Daredevil's identity made all the papers there, Kingpin said (Bendis, 2001). By issue 59, Murdock's bodyguard Jessica Jones asserts, "Everyone on the planet knows you're Daredevil. Everyone knows" (Bendis, 2001).

And like in the comics of the 1960s, it is not only the Kingpin who reads or watches the news and thus springs into action in the story with this newfound information. Another inmate shows Alexander Bont the identity of Daredevil in issue 69, which leads him to target Murdock once getting out of jail (Bendis, 2001). In issue 78, The Owl sees The Kingpin on the news and realizes what he is planning (Bendis, 2001). The Owl says to himself, "This ain't happening," and he springs into action from the information. The Punisher decides to spontaneously get himself arrested and put in jail when he reads a *Daily Bugle* in a diner, talking about Murdock in prison (Brubaker, 2006). In issue 114, part of why Milla's parents are so intent on suing Murdock for custody to get their daughter back is because of what they learn from tabloids about Murdock's alias, Daredevil (Brubaker, 2006). In all these instances, characters rely on the news for information and then take action in their lives, using that information.

Because of the media's reach and impact, characters have also used the media to further their own goals throughout the history of the book. In *Daredevil* volume one, issue 22, Tri-Man uses the media to get Daredevil's attention: "Attention all newspapers, TV and radio: Notify Daredevil to meet me in this ring, or I'll destroy the arena – and everyone within it" (Lee, 1964). When Nelson wants the villain, The Exterminator, to pursue him, his first idea to provoke The Exterminator is to go to the press. Nelson thought that if he told the press that he knew The Exterminator's identity, the villain would come after him. Nelson ends up telling print, radio and TV news, in the effort to spread the word. Writer Bob Gale's story "Playing to the Cameras," in volume two, issues 20 through 25, depicts the character Mr. Griggs as constantly attempting to sway the trial through the media (Gale, 2001). He even tells his lawyers, Nelson and Murdock, that he is adept at it. Murdock admonishes him for not letting them know in advance and further tells him that one cannot go to the media constantly because anything can be used against you in court. Still, Mr. Griggs offers Daredevil a settlement in their property damage case – on television. He says money from damages from a settlement would go to crippled children, and multiple characters say afterward that this makes it look like if Daredevil does not settle, he does not care about crippled children. Daredevil uses the media to respond, saying on television that he has secured \$100,000 in donations to a children's autism foundation if Mr. Griggs ends his lawsuit. Though Nelson and Murdock's assistant Elaine says she knows not to talk to media from working for a congressman, she thinks of ways to use the media to their advantage. She asks if they should leak a tape, showing Daredevil committing property damage. Likewise, Daredevil's lawyer calls a press conference on the roof of a building just to get on the evening news. In volume two, issues 61 through 65, The Black Widow is on the run, not wanting to be traded in a foreign relations move (Bendis, 2001). Her strategy is to stay close to Daredevil, due to the

publicity he gets from having his secret identity leaked. She plans to hide in plain sight, hoping the government would never try to bring her in publicly. This is a case of a story character showing the predictable and repetitive nature of media coverage and using it to her advantage.

The story "The Murdock Papers," taking place in volume two, issues 76 through 81, is all about The Kingpin's use of Urich to get himself out of prison (Bendis, 2001). He has Urich brought to him, with a promise of a major story to relate: that The Kingpin has proof that Murdock is Daredevil. The Kingpin uses the newspaper as a means to broadcast his offer to the FBI. When he has the bureau's audience, he continues to use Urich by keeping him around during the negotiations. His aim is to make sure any possible offer the FBI director presents is published. Once the FBI director tells The Kingpin that if he has proof, then he will get his money and get deported, The Kingpin asks Urich if he got that information. "Yeah," Urich replies. "Call it into your publisher," Kingpin says (Bendis, 2001). Ultimately Kingpin reveals that he actually has no proof that Murdock is Daredevil, but earlier events of the story showed that Daredevil was shot by an FBI sniper on the street and was bleeding. Kingpin surmises that Daredevil was taken to the Night Nurse, a woman who gives medical care to superheroes. Kingpin brings up that Urich wrote a story about the Night Nurse; therefore, he should know where Daredevil is currently. Kingpin has used Urich once again. After saying that, Urich is forced to give up Daredevil's identity or go to jail for obstruction of justice.

Both the FBI director's greatest triumph – the arrest of Daredevil – and his biggest downfall come from people using the media. He was able to arrest Daredevil from The Kingpin using the media to get out of jail. However, when an official at the prison facility Ryker's Island became angry with him, the official leaked a video of The Punisher holding Daredevil hostage in the prison to the television news, in order to smear the FBI director's reputation in volume two,

issue 87 (Brubaker, 2006). This causes the FBI director to lose his job. In issue 92, the former FBI director has lost his life. CNN calls it a suicide and says that his suicide note confessed that the Daredevil is Murdock story was all an elaborate setup to frame Murdock. Yet readers of the comic know this not to be true. The media are being used here to clear Murdock's name.

How the newspapers are physically rendered changes in Daredevil comics. In the *Daredevil* comics of the 1960s, newspapers looked like classic broadsheets or Berliners (Lee, 1964). Newspapers like *The New York Times* were used, in addition to *The Daily Bugle* and other fictitious newspapers. But by the *Daredevil* comics of the late 1990s and 2000s, *The Daily Bugle* had become a tabloid (Bendis, 2001). Throughout writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Alex Maleev's work on the comic book, *The Daily Bugle* as a tabloid was featured, and another tabloid *The Daily Globe* leaked Daredevil's secret identity. In fact, during these issues, even broadsheets like *The Chicago Tribune* were characterized as tabloids, as in volume two, issue 77 (Bendis, 2001).

With a change of writers in issue 82, however, this flawed consistency evaporates (Brubaker, 2006). *The Daily Bugle* in that issue looks like a classic newspaper, not a tabloid. Likewise, when Nelson picks up *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in issue 87, it is a broadsheet, not a tabloid like Bendis and Maleev's *Chicago Tribune*. Brubaker goes for the more true-to-life depiction of the physicality of newspapers. It even shows in how he arranges the headlines. Throughout the years in *Daredevil* comics, newspapers have been full of headlines convenient to the plot, with stories getting top billing, above the fold, questionably. Yet in Brubaker's issue 91 flashback to the events of the first issue of *Daredevil*, *The Daily Bugle* shown has the story-relevant article as simply a side story: "Boxer Murdock slain after knockout punch" (Brubaker, 2006). The headline is something unrelated but more newsworthy: "NASA delays Galileo 7

Mission." Also unlike his predecessors, the newspapers in Brubaker comics use downstyle headline, omitting the use of capital letters to begin each word in a headline. Readers see in issue 93 more of the same from the inside of Brubaker's Daily Bugle, downstyle headlines and no sensationalistic stories. Once again, an unrelated article takes prominence in the paper over the story-relevant one. "Ex-officer charged in child porn case" is above "Estranged wife of crime boss passes away" (Brubaker, 2006). Even still, by issue 96, *The Daily Bugle* is back to looking like a tabloid, with a headline full of capital letters: "GLADIATOR KILLS TWO IN BELLEVUE RAMPAGE" (Brubaker, 2006). In issue 102, it retains its tabloid-style, with a confusing headline: "SUSPECTED DAREDEVIL'S WIFE ARRESTED" (Brubaker, 2006). This lack of consistency of newspapers in the *Daredevil* comics is stark. *The Daily Bugle* is either an objective, classic-looking broadsheet newspaper or a sensationalistic tabloid. There is no middle ground.

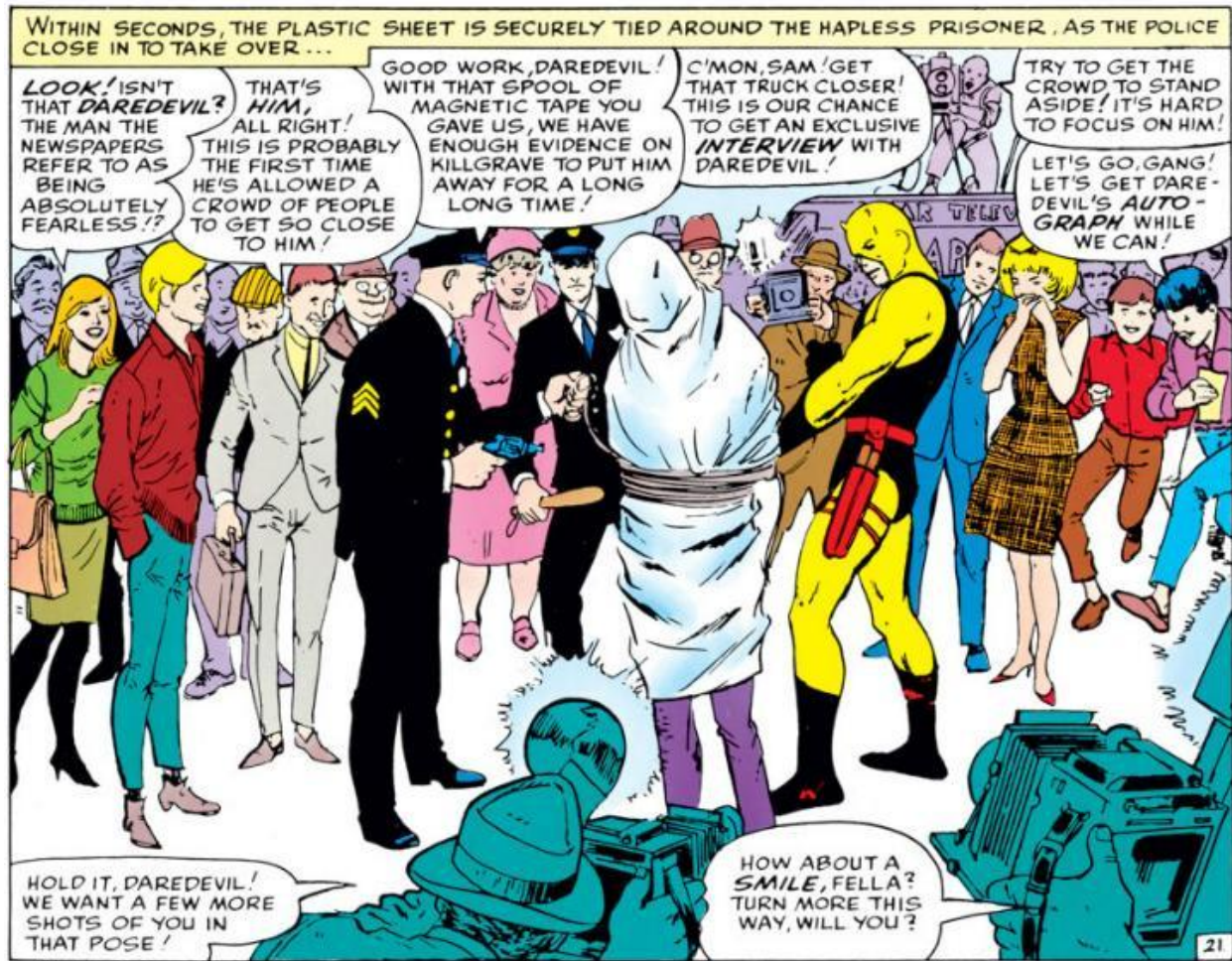


Figure 2: Pack journalists swarm around Daredevil, asking him to pose for photographs in *Daredevil* volume one, issue four. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

### *Pack reporters in Daredevil comics*

Pack journalists are most prominent in *Daredevil* comics since 1998, especially once Matt Murdock's secret identity as *Daredevil* was outed, but examples occurred before that time. As early as volume one, issue 19, published August 1966, narration refers to Karen Page as getting "harassed by newsmen" (Lee, 1964). In the same volume's issue 48, a group of reporters

ask Murdock and Foggy Nelson about the future of their partnership. Both men are annoyed, and Murdock pushes past the crowd, yelling, "No comment." In that volume's issue 175, a large group of reporters surround Nelson and Murdock following a trial.

But the pack journalist characterization – and in particular, the negative stigma towards journalists held by many characters – was not fully realized until the beginning of the series' second volume in 1998. Over the course of the first 40 issues, reporters were referred to as a "media circus" five times, as well as getting called a "media zoo," a "jungle" and "those vultures." As soon as the press is introduced, it is marginalized by characters. In issue three, one character brings up the idea of firing Foggy over a public court case because this kind of scandal can ruin a firm "faster than the press can gossip about it," the idea that journalists are just gossiping nuisances (Smith, 1998).

The story arc "Playing to the Cameras" from issues 20 through 25, published September 2001 through December 2001, delve into the impact of media on a court case (Gale, 2001). Murdock represents Mr. Griggs, who is suing Daredevil for property damage. A constant nuisance to Murdock and Nelson is both the media involvement and Mr. Griggs' knack for alerting the media in an attempt to use them. Murdock even feels happy about an altercation at the Iraqi consulate because that news is a means to distract the media away. When Murdock and Nelson go to a consultation with Mr. Griggs, they are surprised by a pack of reporters. Annoyed, they say, "no comment" as they approach. Mr. Griggs insists he knows how to use the media, but Murdock points out the danger of the media: anything he says can be used against him. Pack reporters wait outside their car, and when they exit, the reporters ambush Nelson and Murdock with questions: "Mr. Murdock, is it your understanding that," "Mr. Nelson, is it true that," "Mr. Nelson, can you tell us if," and "Mr. Murdock, does this case mean that" all are rendered in

speech bubbles. Murdock and Nelson simply say no comment again, showcasing the media as packs to be avoided and annoyed. When Nelson and Murdock tell their new assistant Elaine about the media attention on the case, Elaine says, "Don't worry. I know all about the media – how not to answer their questions, how not to say anything. I used to work for a congressman, remember?" Instead of serving a public service, the media are only an obstacle.

Daredevil's opinion of reporters reaches a new low when he downgrades their characterization in issue 21 from a circus to animals: "I've been to the Bronx Zoo, the Central Park Zoo and the San Francisco Zoo. But they all pale in comparison to the media zoo. Wild animals in their natural habit, ready to engage in a total feeding frenzy," he says (Gale, 2001). In the next issue, when someone comes forward as a potential witness in the case to Murdock and Nelson, Murdock immediately makes certain that he did not talk to any reporters, which he equates to playing to the cameras.

And the staff at the law offices of Nelson and Murdock are not the only people who feel this way about journalists. The defending lawyer in the trial and the judge also call it a circus. The judge is extremely strict toward reporters covering the trial in issue 24. He outlaws cameras and electronic recording devices in his courtroom, but he does so aggressively and with bitterness toward journalists. When one journalist asks a question, the judge tells him to shut up and that it is impolite to interrupt. He lectures the reporters like a father to a child about manners. Later, he says, "You media people can file as many injunctions and motions as you want. But I'll show you what's going to happen to 'em" (Gale, 2001). He then drops a glass of water, letting it smash to the ground. Everybody in the story is vilifying journalists for simply covering the story of the case. They show a preemptive backlash to them through no apparent fault of their own. Simply waiting outside is enough to elicit a comment from Daredevil: "Those reporters camped



outside are making so much noise that with my sensitive hearing, it's impossible for me to sleep" (Gale, 2001). To showcase the media attention during the story, a two-page spread on issue 25 depicts about 40 journalists and about 25 speech bubbles. The following issue has yet another group of pack journalists. The page shows big flashbulbs going off, with journalists yelling, "MURDOCK!" "OVER HERE OVER HERE!" "LOOK THIS WAY!" "NELSON, PLEASE – A STATEMENT!" Like the judge, Nelson admonishes the crowd about manners, saying the family involved in a court case has already been through enough and deserves privacy (Bendis, 2001). Another reporter asks, "Is the rumor true that you may run for Senate?" Murdock replies, "Oh, come on, you made that up." Journalists are portrayed here as insensitive rumormongers.

The characterization continues once *The Daily Globe* tabloid leaks Daredevil's identity (Bendis, 2001). Daredevil becomes most bitter toward journalists in the wake of this news when journalists start to daily impact his life, not just when he is involved in a newsworthy court case. He talks about reporters outside a courthouse, calling them "vultures on the courthouse steps. All of them are sitting and waiting. You should hear them. I can't believe how ready for this they are. They want blood. Everybody wants blood" (Bendis, 2001). When White Tiger runs out of the courthouse with a gun, pack reporters move, and one of them yells, "Go live! Go live!" While people are panicking, journalists are in action. Amidst people with guns, one panel shows a journalist taking a photograph. Journalists are portrayed as set apart, not cognizant of sensitivity or even danger in the pursuit of a story.

In issue 41, readers see the last remaining journalist from the pack covering Murdock, ABC News' Tara Woods (Bendis, 2001). Woods showcases a gotcha journalism that is typical of the pack reporters shown in Daredevil, yet unlike many of the journalists in Daredevil from tabloids, Woods is associated with a network news source. Many of the questions she asks are

repeated questions from previous exchanges. She asks Murdock's bodyguard, Jessica Jones, "Is Mr. Murdock your sole client right now?" Jones tells Woods that she asked her that yesterday. Woods even tries to trick Murdock to see whether he's really blind or not, asking Murdock if he likes her new sweater. He is not surprised by the trick, simply calling it a nice try. Readers see the game depicted in *Daredevil* between reporters and interview subjects as reporters asking their subjects a barrage of questions and subjects resisting answering them. There is never a scenario in the pages of *Daredevil* where a subject would relent to answering questions, unless it involves using the media to a very specific end.

When Daredevil declares war on crime by calling himself the new Kingpin of Hell's Kitchen, the pack journalists return to his doorstep and workplace anew (Bendis, 2001). Murdock is exasperated when he sees the cover of *The Pulse*, showcasing another story about whether he is Daredevil or not. He asks Foggy, "Will it ever end?" Foggy calls it a slow news day and says he's the new "Spider-Man: Menace," referring to J. Jonah Jameson's constant *Daily Bugle* headlines about Spider-Man terrorizing people. Foggy means that Daredevil is the new go-to story when there is nothing else to report on. It implies that Daredevil is not the real news, but reporters are simply not doing their jobs in finding out the news of the day, seeking out the obvious sensationalistic piece first. Foggy tells Murdock that the pack reporters are back by simply saying, "They're out there," as a warning. When Daredevil meets the pack reporters, the page shines white from all the camera flashbulbs. Again, readers see the game between reporters and people, the idea that reporters wear down their subjects until they give up and tell the truth. When reporters ask Murdock if he is Daredevil or not, a full year since the story broke in the *Daily Bugle*, Murdock replies, "Are you seriously asking me that? I answered it a year ago." The reporters ignore it, and one reporter continues to assume Murdock is Daredevil in his

questioning: "What did you hope to accomplish when you declared yourself Kingpin?" The pressure of the constant questions is getting to Murdock. In narration, he says he is resisting going to the *Daily Bugle* and yelling in Jameson's face that he is Daredevil. But Murdock continues on in the relentless endurance test posed by the pack journalists.

In issue 65, even Spider-Man, himself a long-time *Daily Bugle* photographer as Peter Parker, has strongly negative opinions of the press (Bendis, 2001). He is surprised there are so many pack reporters outside Daredevil's door. He suggests that due to Daredevil's past good deeds as a vigilante, reporters should ignore this story. He says, "Doesn't the fact that Daredevil has saved so many lives, helped so many people, doesn't that put ANY credit in the bank with these reporters?" Interestingly, he refers to them as "these reporters," when he himself was in the press corps for years. Even still, he displays his knowledge of the profession. "I've got half a mind to bounce down there and give them a lecture in media culture and ethics," he says. He compares being under the microscope of pack reporters to being in danger: "They rush us. A stampede of stupid coming right for us. So we both go to the only SAFE place people like us can go anymore," he says. This idea is reiterated as Parker reclines on a couch with his wife, but he stares blankly, thinking about what would happen if his secret was leaked.

The portrayal of pack journalists as insensitive, ignorant and relentless continues throughout the second volume of *Daredevil* (Bendis, 2001). In issue 78, mirroring the actions of the ABC News journalist talking to Murdock and Jones 40 issues prior, one reporter tracks down Nelson's private phone line and calls him on it, while Nelson is hiding from the press (Bendis, 2001). "This is my private line!! How did you get this – No comment!!" Nelson yells. He turns to Black Widow and asks, having become afraid of the pack journalists, "Did-did the press see you come in here??" Later, pack journalists surround Foggy, in the wake of poor news about

Murdock. In one panel, about 10 recorders or microphones surround Foggy's sad face, and he says nothing. Finally bodyguard Luke Cage tells everyone to back off. Cage later incredulously answers a journalist's question, as if even attempting to ask Cage a question was ignorant. "I'm not talking about my personal life, and I'm not talking about the Avengers," Cage yells.

Even after public opinion completely reverses itself, following Daredevil's name getting cleared thanks to an apparent FBI cover-up, Murdock still talks down to the press. He says, "If you'll all just give me a moment, please. If you'll let me, I'll tell you my story. That's why you're here, right?" Even when wishing to talk to reporters to give his invented side of the story, he talks down to reporters. In issue 93, during this press gathering, readers see Urich in the pack for one of the first times. Urich, often the exception in *Daredevil* comics as a competent journalist, only appears in the pack when the news is favorable toward Murdock, implying that to participate in the pack earlier was to lack ethics. Reporters push in, yelling out questions to Murdock. Finally, one reporter implies he doesn't believe the story, springing Murdock's bodyguard Jessica Jones into action. "That's it – No more questions! Mr. Murdock's been through enough. He doesn't need any more wild accusations in the press," Jones says. The story paints the reporters as insensitive, unethical, nagging vultures, even though the main characters in the story are all lying. In this example, *Daredevil* comics tells readers that reporting the truth is much more harmful than maintaining a lie, even if it is in the public's right to know.

### *Incompetent journalism in Daredevil comics*

While *Daredevil* comics have had a prominent supporting character in the field – journalist Ben Urich – as well as a number of storylines where the media play a key part, examples of incompetent journalism have been featured throughout the years. The examples

range from stylistic errors, such as poor headlines or grammar, to complete lack of understanding of the makeup of a journalistic story: the neglect of use of the inverted pyramid, the absence of cited sources or the proliferation of wild assumptions.

Ideal newspaper headlines have a subject and a verb. They avoid use of the word "is" with phrases that imply that word. They avoid use of the word "and" by using a comma instead. They avoid use of the word "says" by using a colon after the name or position of the speaker, but they avoid using the full names of speakers. They should also avoid alliteration or words that have double meanings. The ultimate goal is to be clear, concise and accurate. All the above rules also follow for subheads, and both headlines and subheads are generally short, especially in newspapers.

Frequently *Daredevil* comics feature poor headlining. In *Daredevil* volume one, issue nine, the subhead of a story about the ruler of Lichtenbad is far too long (Lee, 1964). A headline shown in issue 42 has a typo: "CITY PLAGUED BY JESTER'S ONE-MAN CRIME WAVE. POLICE CANCEL ALL LEAVES." Going further, in volume two, issue 76, the newspaper fails to spell its own name correctly, saying, "DAYLY BUGLE EXCLUSIVE" (Bendis, 2001). Issue 45 shows a newspaper with a headline that works – "DAREDEVIL DASHES FOR FREEDOM" – but the subhead is far too long: "SO FAR THE ELUSIVE DAREDEVIL HAS MANAGED TO ESCAPE THE POLICE" (Lee, 1964). The headline and subhead take up half of an inside newspaper page when the subhead could be reduced to "Daredevil manages to escape police." The use of "so far" is superfluous, as any newspaper crime update is going to contain all the information "so far." Daredevil escaping the police means he's "elusive," so that word is also superfluous. And headline style dictates to avoid "the," but this headline uses two instances of it.

Besides the style of the headlines, they often also are obtuse or vague. Broad headlines like "CRIME WAVE HITS CITY" in issue 10 and "FANTASTIC ROBBERY!" in issue 30 adorn newspapers. Headlines like "COURT STUNNED BY COUNSELOR'S DARING LEGAL TACTIC" in issue 47 beg the question, what exactly happened? A *Daily Bugle* headline in Daredevil volume two, issue five, simply consists of "FRIEND OF ACCUSED QUILTS" (Smith, 1998). That demands more information. The newspaper copy desks in the comics feel more interested in trumpeting how "strange," "fantastic" or "daring" something is, rather than telling the public the specifics in the headline. One later headline has a number of possible meanings. In volume two, issue 102, *The Daily Bugle*'s headline is "SUSPECTED DAREDEVIL'S WIFE ARRESTED" (Brubaker, 2006). It is intended to mean that the wife of the man suspected to be Daredevil is missing. However, it could be understood as Daredevil's suspected wife or even possibly as Daredevil's wife is suspected of being arrested.

Later issues show newspaper headlines becoming less serious and more frivolous. In volume two, issue 64, *The Daily Bugle* website has a headline, "MURDOCK MOWDOWN" with the subhead, "GUNFIRE RINGS OUT FOR LUNCHTIME LAWYER AND HIS MYSTERY GAL PAL" (Bendis, 2001). The headline attempts humor with alliteration and rhyming, even though the story is about a murder attempt. One newspaper in the next issue resembles more closely a one-page newsletter, with an odd, Arial-like font for the headline. It simply reads, "DAREDEVIL IS MATT MURDOCK!" However, all the above headlines are preferable to two particularly poor headlines. One of the headlines reads, "THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR– BUSTED!!" ending one line in the middle of a word and finishing the word in the second line. It also uses a needless amount of dashes. The other paper simply has a banner called

"NEWS NOW!!" with a headline of "UNMASKED!! DAREDEVIL." Both papers fail to even say who Daredevil is in the headlines.

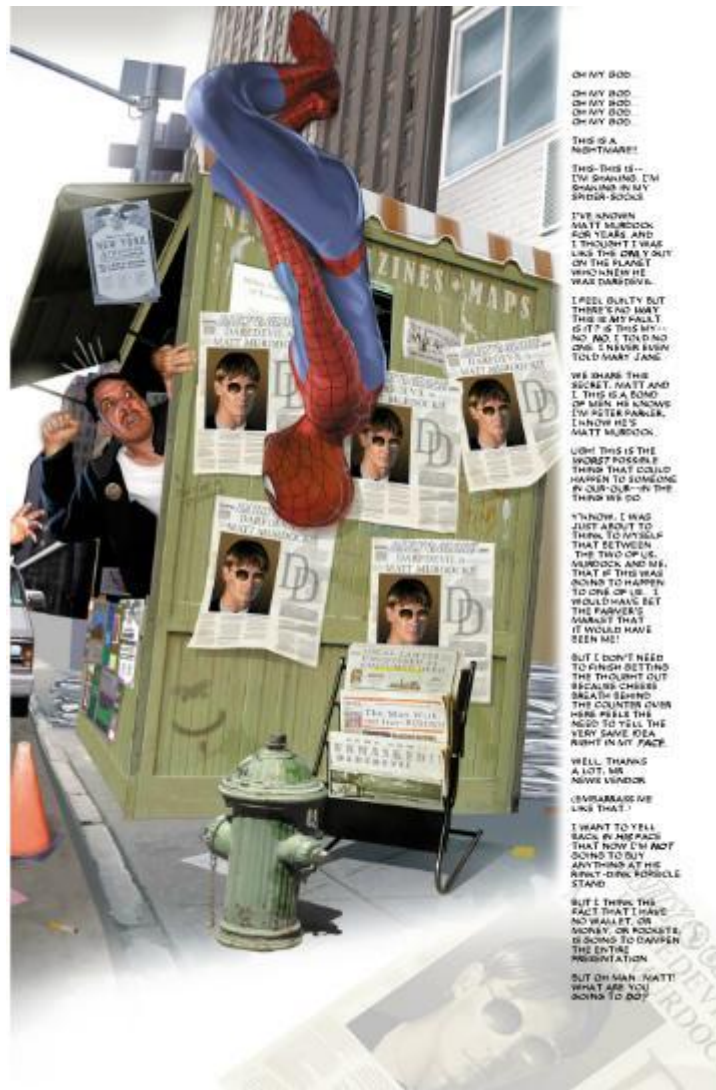


Figure 3: *Daily Bugle* newspapers look more like one-page newsletters in *Daredevil* volume two, issue 65. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

Worst of all, in a scene with former *Daily Bugle* photographer Peter Parker sitting on the couch with his wife, one newspaper spread is framed, hanging on the wall. It is a photo essay,

but the headline contains the only information about them: "Parker's Amazing Photos! EXPOSE." Giving credit to photographers is what bylines or photo credits are for, not headlines. Furthermore, the photo essay is called an "expose," but there is no information about what the photos are exposing.

The errors continue when the comics show partial or full stories from the newspapers. Even Ben Urich, frequently held up as an exceptionally strong journalist, showcases poor journalistic writing multiple times. In issue 163, Urich figures out Murdock is Daredevil through piecing together several clues, showing his investigative skills, but when he sits down to write the story, he buries the lead. He begins writing on his typewriter, "Few people remember battling Jack Murdock now. He was a second-rate boxer who lived and died in an era of second-rate boxers. All he wanted was a shot in the back. It was his murder that prompted his son, Matthew, to become Daredevil" (McKenzie, 1979). Earlier in the story, narration calls this Urich's "biggest exclusive of his career," and yet when he sits down to write it, he buries the monumental news that Murdock is Daredevil behind prologue. He does not reveal who Daredevil is until the fourth sentence of the story, and he does not reveal his source for the knowledge in the first paragraph at all. Urich's story in issue 165 about the Black Widow has a stronger lead and follows the inverted pyramid more fluidly (McKenzie, 1979). But for a front-page story, it is only three paragraphs, and Urich uses the magazine style of placing quotes at the end of paragraphs, instead of setting off quotes as their own paragraphs.

Another Urich story from *Daredevil* volume two, issue six, is full of inaccuracies (Smith, 1998). Urich hyphenates "hate-crime." He uses the Oxford comma. He says "The *Bugle* has learned" needlessly. If a story is in *The Daily Bugle*, that idea is implied. He uses a questionable transition "even more baffling," which would inject some opinion into the hard news story on a



massacre. Urich capitalizes random words like "Infanticide" and "Mission." He uses single quotes for a composition title when double quotes are necessary, and he even puts a comma on the outside of the quotes, violating a basic punctuation rule. While the reporting is stronger than previous efforts, the story is littered with grammatical and style errors, and this is from a reporter who is lauded and praised throughout the book as an expert in the field.



Figure 4: Ben Urich writes a *Daily Bugle* story with no named sources and withheld information in *Daredevil*, volume two, issue 80. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

In issue 80, Urich seems to regress again in his reporting (Bendis, 2001). He writes a story called "Night Nurse: Even Heroes Need a Helping Hand," which again, sounds more like a short story title than a newspaper headline. The story is about a nurse who aids superheroes by providing them with discreet medical care. Perhaps most damning, Urich never identifies his one source for the story, the actual Night Nurse, by name. Paragraphs like "Its whereabouts will have to remain a mystery," referring to where the Night Nurse works, reek of Urich teasing information he knows but not actually sharing it with readers or the public. His lead is too long, and he uses passive voice and "says" throughout. Yet just eight issues later, in issue 88, Urich is watching TV news and critiquing it to himself (Brubaker, 2006). He hears the TV journalist say, "Daredevil remains missing, whereabouts unknown," and scoffs, saying the phrase "whereabouts unknown" is superfluous because that is what "missing" means. Yet earlier in the comic, Urich not only made countless grammatical and reporting errors but also specifically did the same thing he laughs at the TV reporter for doing: using unnecessary words. It is unsurprising that, as writers and artists change, Urich's character would change, and his approach to journalism might differ. But it is interesting that, in a title that uses journalists and the media so frequently, these inconsistencies exist.

It is not just Urich depicted as an incompetent journalist in the pages of *Daredevil*. In volume one, issue 169, Murdock goes on the show *Good Evening, New York* with Tom Snyder (Miller, 1981). Instead of asking Murdock about his connection to recent murders that Murdock

was connected to, Snyder instead asks an inane question, how can Murdock address a jury when he is blind? Additionally, Snyder constantly interrupts Murdock before asking the question. When a special news bulletin breaks into the broadcast, saying that Bullseye has escaped, Snyder remarks, "Wasn't that a thrill," not recognizing the importance of the news. But when he turns back to Murdock, Murdock has already left. Murdock has decided that Bullseye's escape is more important than the show, and the issue suggests that the incompetence of Snyder made the decision easy. When Snyder attempts to interview Bullseye in prison in issue 181, it only allows for his escape (Miller, 1981).

Mark Twain's adage, "The news of my death has been greatly exaggerated," is applicable to *Daredevil* comics. Perhaps most egregiously, multiple times in the comic, when a character might be dead, the media confirm it before it is officially confirmed. It becomes problematic when, in several of these cases, the person in question is not actually dead. In volume two, issue 13, television news reports that The Kingpin is presumed dead after a shooting. But *The Daily Bugle* calls him dead in its headline. The story alludes to the pressure of getting the news out first. In issue 14, Daredevil says he hears five different channels in the neighborhood, "each one competing to describe its own perspective of Wilson Fisk's presumed death" (Mack, 2000). Kingpin is actually alive. Again, after the events of the story "Underboss," in volume two, issues 26 through 30, *The Daily Bugle* reports that The Kingpin is dead (Bendis, 2001). Again, he is not. In volume two, issue 80, it is Daredevil who gets the infamous send-off. Nelson sees a TV news headline: "DAREDEVIL DEAD." Other characters are already skeptical of the media and their past with these stories, however. "It's just the damn TV," Iron Fist says. "Doesn't mean it's true" (Bendis, 2001). In a rush to break the news first, it becomes more important for news agencies in *Daredevil* comics to get the news, whether it is accurate or not.

It is not just matters of life and death that newspapers report incorrectly in *Daredevil* comics. Topics as trivial as sports are incorrect in the pages. In *Daredevil* volume two, issue nine, *The Daily Bugle* headline reads: "METS WIN SERIES, Yankees fall apart" (Mack, 1999). Since the story was published December 1999, it seems to allude to that year's World Series two months prior. However, the Mets did not play in that year's World Series, and the Yankees won it. This could be an attempt at humor or have to do with the comic publishing schedule, but it still represents an error the newspapers report in *Daredevil* comics. Likewise, in issue 13, the back pages say, "METS BEAT YANKS 5-0" (Mack, 2000). Another story on the *Bugle* front page in issue 13 called "ECHOES IN THE PLAYGROUND" had a photo caption: "Daredevil joins Echo to reenact her play at a playground performance for children" (Mack, 2000). However, readers know from the story that this is incorrect. In actuality, Daredevil and Echo did battle, and casual onlookers thought it to be a play. This is another instance of newspapers taking story events at face value.



Figure 5: Daredevil asks Ben Urich for information in *Daredevil* volume one, issue 160.

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*Early Urich: Daredevil, volume one, 159-161*

*Contrast between pack journalists and expert journalist Urich in Daredevil 159-161*

In *Daredevil* issue 159, readers' first view of journalists is once again that of the pack reporter. The July 1979 issue, written by Roger McKenzie and drawn by Frank Miller, introduces readers to the scene of Murdock at a press conference with Murdock reacting as if he is literally being attacked, with his arms up and partially shielding himself (McKenzie, 1979).

The press conference is to address the events of the issue prior. One television newscaster sums up that Murdock was the victim of a kidnapping that led to the deaths of three men in a cemetery. Just like with his previous encounter with pack reporters, Murdock flees to get away from the masses. He says, "I've no comment for the press at this time." Reporters press the issue. One reporter says, "But counselor--!" Nelson admonishes them, yelling, "You heard my partner -- No comment!"

Another panel shows veteran newspaper reporter and chain smoker Ben Urich holding his notepad and thinking about the scene (McKenzie, 1979). While the television reporters and others crowd Murdock and Nelson, taking photographs, readers get the impression that Urich is more laid-back, taking the scene in and ruminating on it. Narration allows readers a glimpse into Urich's thoughts: "It's what we didn't hear that interests me! There's more to Matt Murdock than meets the eye. I'd bet my press card on it." Likewise, *The Daily Bugle* newspaper that readers see later in the issue is more straight-laced and accurate, showing Urich's story with the headline "Widow returns" and the subhead "Natasha back in Big Apple."

*Daredevil* issue 160, also by McKenzie and Miller, goes further in its glowing representation of Urich as a model newspaper investigative reporter (McKenzie, 1979). Murdock, complete in the red garb of his Daredevil costume, lounges at Urich's desk at *The Daily Bugle* offices. This scene is eyebrow-raising because of corrupt *Daily Bugle* editor J. Jonah Jameson's long-time assault on Spider-Man in the editorial pages. In the same panel as Urich and Daredevil talking, another reporter is handed papers and remarks, "Oh no! Not another Spider-Man expose!" And yet Daredevil trusts Urich enough to leisurely sip on a coffee cup and ask him, "Just what information do you have on Bullseye?" The fact that Daredevil, a resourceful investigator in his own right, defers to Urich's knowledge also shows how much faith Daredevil

has in Urich's investigative skills. Urich's reply to the response is simple: "Nothing we didn't print, Daredevil." Daredevil asks Urich to fill him in.

In this issue, readers see more of the laid-back Urich style in how he casually replies, "If you tell me how long you've known Matt Murdock" (McKenzie, 1979). When Daredevil shrugs off the question, simply saying, "a while," Urich does not press the issue, unlike his pack reporter brethren. Urich launches into the news about Bullseye, fulfilling his end of the bargain. When Daredevil abruptly disappears through the window, Urich stares for a long time before filing his cross-index folders, a Daredevil folder under "M" for Murdock. Readers learn that Urich is close to learning Daredevil's secret identity. Unlike his pack reporter brethren and unlike what transpires in *Daredevil*, volume two, issues 32 through 37 from the 2000s when a tabloid leaks Daredevil's secret identity, Urich does nothing.

In the final issue of the 1970s *Daredevil* selections, issue 161 by McKenzie and Miller, readers see Urich's interview style, laid-back and conversational, not confrontational like the pack reporter (McKenzie, 1979). And unlike the pack reporter who might only target celebrities, such as prominent New York attorney Murdock, Urich is content when he is referred to a janitor at a boxing gym. He interviews the janitor to learn more about Murdock, as this was where Murdock's father, Battlin' Jack Murdock, trained. The janitor is not scared of Urich's interview and not afraid of being misquoted or misrepresented in a story. Instead he welcomes the interview. He says, "Point is, Mr. Urich, you're the first reporter I seen 'round here since Battlin' Jack Murdock was murdered years ago. I s'pose most folks done forgot all about it now, but I ain't." Readers see the opposite effect that reporters can have on interview subjects here: Reporters can make the subjects feel proud, important and worth talking to. In addition, the



intimate, one-on-one interview between Urich and the janitor differs from the frenzied press conference of two issues ago.

Plus Urich did his homework for the interview, casually asking questions about Murdock and Murdock's father as if he read a biography or previous clips beforehand (McKenzie, 1979). And in stark contrast to the lack of vetting done in the 1960s *Daredevil* selections, Urich is going above and beyond the call of duty to make sure he is right about Daredevil's secret identity, interviewing a janitor two degrees of separation removed from Murdock. When the janitor brings up that Murdock had a childhood nickname, and Urich guesses that it was "Daredevil," the janitor confirms it. Furthermore, Urich now has confirmation that Murdock is Daredevil. Urich is playing the story calmly and close to the vest, but narration tells us that he thinks he is close to "the most sensational story of Ben Urich's twenty-year journalistic career." It makes his ultimate decision to not divulge Daredevil's identity in later issues all the more noble. These issues are the beginning of the depiction of Urich in the pages of *Daredevil* as a reporter who considers the ethics behind leaking Daredevil's identity and the possible ramifications of the stories he tells.





Figure 6: Ben Urich's thoughts constantly return to his fantasy of winning a Pulitzer Prize in *Daredevil* volume one, issue 179. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

### *Journalist seeking fame and fortune in Daredevil comics*

The comic goes back continually to the idea that journalists seek to earn fame and fortune from their craft. They are doing their jobs not merely to excel at their profession but to land a particularly noteworthy story and becoming rich, award-winning celebrities. In *Daredevil*, volume one, issue 44, reporters see Daredevil fighting a man (Lee, 1964). One journalist says, "Get those cameras rolling! This'll be the scoop of the century" (Lee, 1964). Photographers shoot photos, signified by "CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!" on the page. When Daredevil appears to have killed the man he was fighting by throwing him off a bridge, one reporter calls it a "callous murder" but instantly alludes to the fame he could garner from the footage: "These scenes will be as famous as Ruby's shooting of Oswald" (Lee, 1964). Instead of concern for the person they thought was murdered – but in actuality, was not – the journalist is portrayed as instantly thinking of the fame.

When Urich learns Daredevil's secret identity in volume one, issue 164, Daredevil tells him that his career is over if Urich writes the story (McKenzie, 1979). Urich tells Daredevil what the story would mean for him. He does not even mention a journalist's obligation to uncover the truth or the public's right to know. He simply thinks of his personal gain from the story. Finally he burns his notes in a gesture telling Daredevil that he will not write the story. In issue 179 of the same volume, Urich brings up knowing Daredevil's secret again, but he only talks of how it could have garnered him the Pulitzer Prize, not thinking of any journalistic ethics (Miller, 1981). In the next issue, Urich even thinks that if Daredevil died, then he could write the story, alluding once again to the award: "Hey, what's a Pulitzer Prize between friends?"

It becomes a constant source of Urich's agony, thinking about what could have been if he was willing to share Daredevil's secret. As years pass, however, Urich's friendship with

Daredevil solidifies, making him feel more guilty for these thoughts. In volume two, issue 16, Urich says that he wishes he could write the story, but that would make him an "evil, selfish bastard" and a "horrible person" (Bendis, 2001). In that volume's issue 57, Urich elaborates on what he thinks would happen if he wrote the story about Daredevil: "I would be rich. Awards, book deals, movie deals, talk shows ... there's no question. But, I knew that outing him would do nothing but hurt. Hurt the city. Hurt Matt. His friends. His family. I couldn't live with it. I mean, morally. The repercussions of it all" (Bendis, 2001). Urich says he even dreamed about what would happen to Daredevil if he did write the story, saying he thought several of his villains would become a group and destroy him and his friends. Readers see how much the recognition and fame means to Urich by how often he goes back to it and how elaborate his fantasies are, regarding telling the Daredevil story.

When following up on the Cherryh story in volume one, issue 179, Urich dreams about getting a Pulitzer Prize again. He is even willing to put himself in harm's way, waiting across the street from a meeting place between The Kingpin and Cherryh. While taking photos, he thinks about potentially getting the prize: "Twenty minutes pass, while I think about how a Pulitzer Prize would look on my desk. I try not to think about how I'd look on a slab" (Miller, 1981). He even recognizes the extreme danger he puts himself in, in order to land the big story and possibly earn the prize. Readers realize that it is all he is thinking about, as he brings it up again: "Then Cherryh arrives. In my mind, I'm polishing my Pulitzer" (Miller, 1981).

Occasionally, readers see why Urich got into the newspaper business, or why he continues in the job today, and they paint Urich as a disappointed cynic, placing income before his happiness. In *Daredevil* volume two, issue 16, Urich reveals that he originally wanted to be a creative writer (Bendis, 2001). He wanted to paint "word pictures" in people's minds through

stories. He surmised that he was not very creative, so he became a journalist instead. He says he still gets to paint "word pictures," but he cynically adds that they are usually about real-life tragedy.

Despite his employment with *The Daily Bugle*, Urich constantly talks poorly of the newspaper and its editor, J. Jonah Jameson, such as in volume two, issue 18. "Many might wonder why someone like myself would work for an abusive piece of garbage like J. Jonah Jameson – publisher of the great metropolitan rag: *The Daily Bugle*," he says (Bendis, 2001). He says the reason why he stays is because of the money and the knowledge that Urich has a story Jameson can never publish – that Murdock is Daredevil. Though Urich develops a bond with the label of "investigative journalist," he lacks the same bond with *The Daily Bugle* or Jameson. When Murdock answers Urich's call in volume two, issue 61, Murdock tells Urich, "Don't call me to apologize for that headline on your paper" (Bendis, 2001). Urich replies, "It's not my paper. I just work—" before being cut off, suggesting Urich does not associate with the *Bugle* because he does not approve of its content.

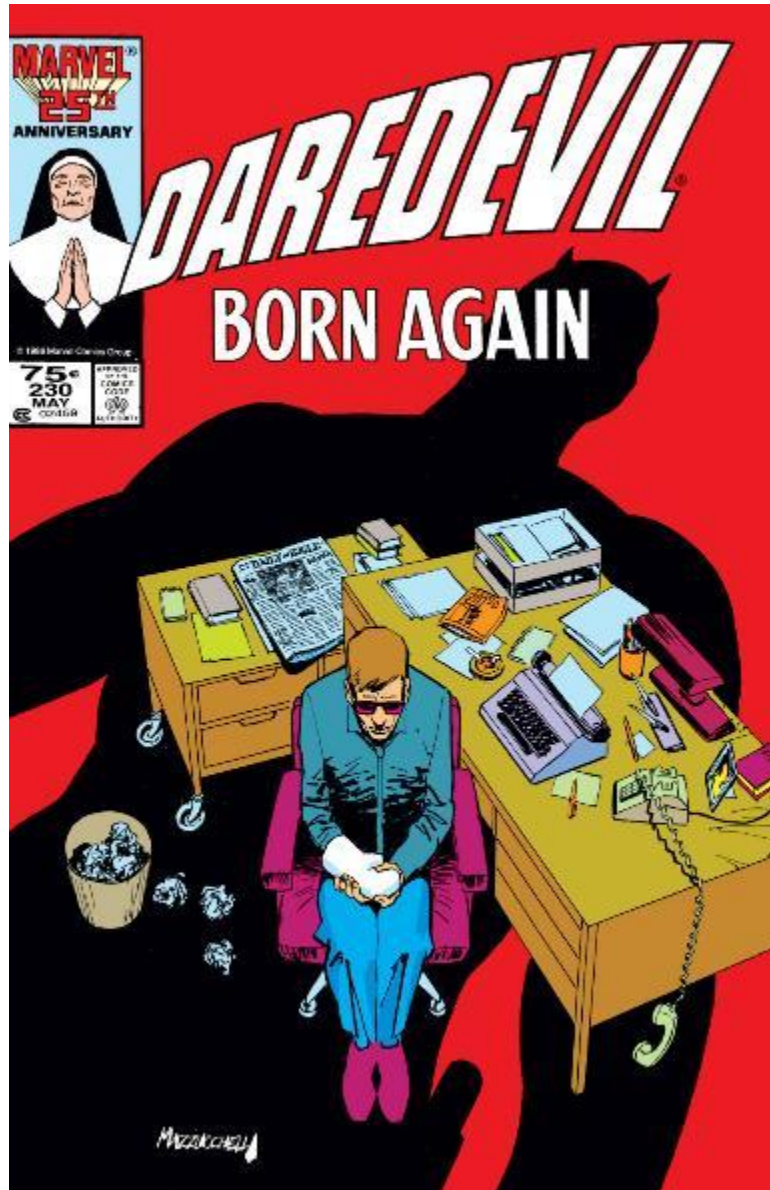


Figure 7: Ben Urich on the cover of *Daredevil* volume one, issue 230. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

*Writer Frank Miller's signature work, Daredevil: "Born Again"*

The *Daredevil: "Born Again"* story arc, printed in *Daredevil* issues 227 through 233, has all the inspirational journalistic flare of the movie *All the President's Men*. Written by Frank

Miller and drawn by David Mazzucchelli, a major sub plot of the arc focuses on Ben Urich, his reaction to intimidation from the Kingpin to stop pursuing a story regarding Daredevil, and Urich's response (Miller, 1986). Published from February through August 1986, the main story follows Daredevil's descent into madness. After learning Daredevil's secret identity from his ex-girlfriend Karen Page, the Kingpin dismantles Murdock's life, calling in favors to take away his job, his friends and his law practice. Murdock's life is spiraling, and so is his psyche. Ultimately after identifying Kingpin as the reason behind all of his troubles and surviving attacks from Kingpin's men, Murdock climbs back to sanity, rescues Page and dons the costume of Daredevil once again.

*Journalist with a conflict of interest in Daredevil: "Born Again"*

All the while, Urich is attempting to break the story on Murdock. In issue 227, he hears about Murdock first from an *Associated Press* wire report that says Murdock faces charges of bribery, perjury and misconduct (Miller, 1986). Urich thinks it is a frameup by the Kingpin, which it ultimately is. Here, readers see Urich as a friend of his interview subject. He is caring and sees past the reports, though it is through a conflict of interest. Unlike the pack reporter who focuses on nothing but the scoop, Urich calls Murdock out of friendship, not in pursuit of a story. He says, "Matt, I'm your friend, remember?" He says, "Matt – if it's off the record, you know you can trust me."

In the next issue, Urich is further painted as loyal, defending Murdock to *Daily Bugle* editor J. Jonah Jameson (Miller, 1986). He admits that Murdock is a friend of his, but he holds that up as the reason behind why he knows the story is false. He again jumps to the conclusion that it's a frameup by the Kingpin. Not knowing Murdock is Daredevil, Jameson does not see the

connection. Urich knows Daredevil is Murdock, but he holds this information back from his editor, showing that Urich's friendship to Murdock here is more important than his journalistic duties, a questionable ethical tactic on its own. But the context of the story suggests the power of information, the idea that anyone knowing Murdock is Daredevil can haunt him and truly bring down Hell's Kitchen's superhero. So this particular withholding of information is painted as positive. Urich feels so strongly about the story that he suggests he'll quit if Jameson does not let him write the story. Urich here is the ultimate crusading journalist, standing up for truth and justice. Even still, Jameson suggests that Urich usually sticks to the unbiased definition of journalism. He says, "Isn't like you to take a stand, Ben."

*Crusading journalist in Daredevil: "Born Again"*

In issue 229, Urich interviews police Lieutenant Nick Manolis at a hospital. Manolis ultimately admits to participating in the frameup, in order to pay for treatment for his son's heart condition. Here, Urich strikes a tenuous balance between the tenacious pack reporter and the conversational, laid-back Urich, as depicted in the '70s *Daredevil* selections. Here, Urich is dogged and persistent. Readers see this through Manolis' reactions to Urich. Upon walking in, Manolis says, "You again ... told you to leave me alone" (Miller, 1986). But unlike the pack reporter, Urich is not out to vilify Manolis. He shows that he understands the world is not black and white and that he has real concern for the child involved. Urich hedges for Manolis' indiscretion: "You're not the first cop to go bad, Manolis. And it's not like you didn't have a reason. The best treatment for certain cardiac problems costs bags of money – more than a cop's medical plan provides. By the way, how's the kid?" (Miller, 1986). After the son dies, Urich seems to critique the cliché question journalists ask of the grieving: "How does that make you

feel?” Ulrich bristles at the idea of someone asking him that, saying, if you want to know the answer, “you’re a ghoul.” The attendant nurse turns out to be under the employ of the Kingpin, and she brutalizes Manolis and breaks Ulrich’s fingers in the hospital parking lot. She tells Ulrich, “Every time you speak the name of Matthew Murdock, you shall lose the use of your fingers” (Miller, 1986).

*Daredevil* issue 230’s cover depicts Ulrich sitting in a chair, with one hand in a cast (Miller, 1986). He is turned away from his typewriter, symbolizing his fear of writing about Murdock after Kingpin’s deterrence. Daredevil casts a literal shadow over the entire cover, showing how Daredevil is casting a shadow over Ulrich and his work.

At first, Ulrich is frightened by the deterrence (Miller, 1986). He repeats the nurse’s mantra in his head not to speak his name. When Ulrich’s wife Doris talks to Ulrich, worried about what will happen to them, Ulrich whispers to her a reminder not to speak Murdock’s name. This time, he even goes further, telling her to not even think Murdock’s name. He is still wearing the cast on his hand from his injuries, even though *Daily Bugle* city editor Robbie Robertson tells Ulrich that the doctor said it should have come off days ago. The cast serves as a physical representation of the mental crippling Kingpin has dealt Ulrich. Readers get the impression that Ulrich is deeply shaken to the core by this deterrence. Robertson tells Ulrich to take days off to get better.



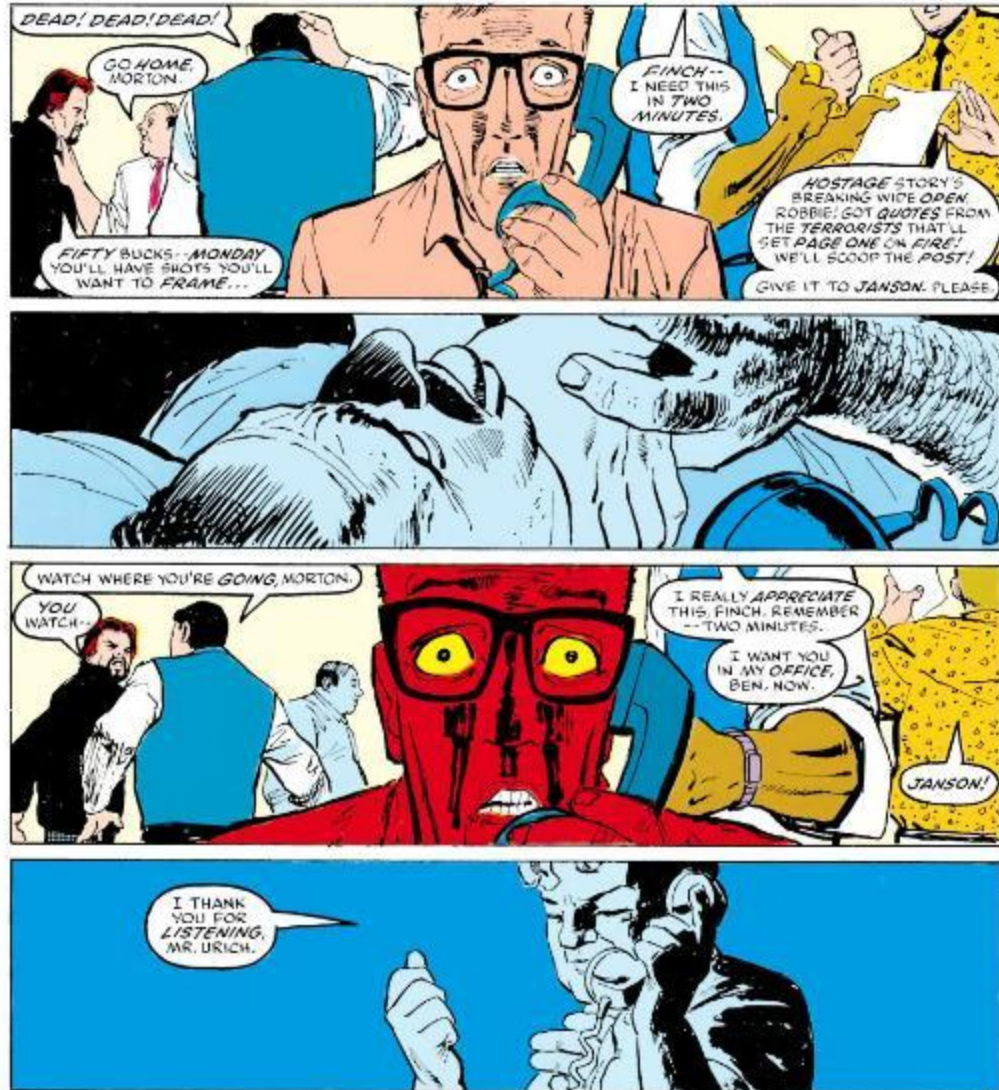


Figure 8: Ben Urich on the telephone in *Daredevil* volume one, issue 230. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

### *Journalist as superior public servant in Daredevil: “Born Again”*

The story showcases the power of journalism (Miller, 1986). Miller even casts long-vilified Jameson as the trumpeter of the potential impact of crusading newspaper reporting. Jameson talks with Urich, telling him he has seen journalists get scared away from stories before,

with journalists begging to pursue a story and then abruptly begging off of it. He tells Urich the No. 1 priority of journalists is not getting scared off stories. He assures Urich that he has the power in this struggle between himself and Kingpin, with Urich working at a newspaper with five million readers. Jameson even makes an allusion to Watergate in his speech: "It can depose mayors. It can destroy presidents. And it's been due to get aimed at the Kingpin for awhile now." Urich merely looks away. Despite Urich's fears, Jameson says, "You're lucky I don't fire you." Here, journalists are depicted as public servants on the same plane as police officers. They have a duty to the public, and if they fail to perform that duty, they ought to no longer have their job, no matter the threats they receive. Leaving Jameson's office, a janitor tells Urich that it is good he has decided not to take action, revealing yet another person close to Urich in the Kingpin's employ.

That issue later depicts a crowded newsroom, confronting morning deadlines (Miller, 1986). Urich is contrasted with two other kinds of journalists, and readers see Urich as the caring, compassionate journalist once again. In the panels, behind Urich at his desk, Miller depicts two different kinds of journalists: a photographer thinking only of the job as money and another journalist only interested in the scoop. The photographer argues with his editor, saying he needs the money from published work for rent. The other journalist comes in and says he has a scoop for page one. He gloats about getting quotes from terrorists and says it will light page one on fire, possibly a quip related to arson by which the terrorists might have been responsible. Here, readers see the difference between Urich and his reporting brethren, those focusing on the low pay of the profession or thinking only of real-life events as potential stories to scoop. All this information in the background is contrasted with Urich's shocked face while on the telephone. Manolis has called him from his hospital bed to tell Urich his story, but Urich says he is no

longer interested. During the call, the nurse takes the phone from Manolis and chokes Manolis to death, allowing Urich to hear the murder. Urich is shocked by what he hears. Even so, sitting on a park bench in the snow at the end of the issue, he simply says the name, “Matthew Murdock,” and takes off the cast. Urich, the example from *Daredevil* of the ideal journalist, will stand up to his intimidators when other public servants do not.

He begins pursuit of the story again (Miller, 1986). He gives his statement on the murder of Manolis to police. He starts writing articles for *The Daily Bugle* on the topic, such as one article in issue 231 headlined “Cop Strangled in Hospital Bed” and another called “The Kingpin of Crime: A Six Part Series by Ben Urich.” Not only is Urich daring to write about the Kingpin story, he has turned it into an extended, detailed, six-part story. Readers first see the power of print from the fact that Kingpin’s organization wants to relocate the nurse now that Urich is writing about the story. As a result, the nurse seeks out Urich and his wife to kill. She goes to their apartment. When Urich’s wife lets her in, she attempts to hang her with a tie in the bathroom. Urich and his police escort come to the apartment, with the nurse fighting the escort and Urich saving his wife. Urich grabs a razor from the bathroom to defend himself, only to find that Murdock stealthily showed up while he was in the bathroom, taking down and handcuffing the nurse. Urich now knows that Murdock is back. In yet another example of the power of newspapers, the fight is immediately followed by a phone call from Melvin Potter, who has seen Urich’s *Bugle* work and wants to talk to him.

Even though the murder was unsuccessful, Urich goes through the same trauma after yet another act of deterrence from the Kingpin (Miller, 1986). “Right in my own home,” he thinks, repeatedly. But unlike last time, Urich continues, undeterred. He has gotten over the idea that the Kingpin will scare him away from the story. He interviews Nelson about Murdock and his

whereabouts. Nelson is even reading *The Daily Bugle* when Urich approaches. Urich even scores an interview with the nurse who tried to strangle his wife, showing a remarkable amount of restraint and objectivity. When Kingpin hears of this, he instructs the police commissioner to have a specific officer, Officer Coogan, on duty during that interview at the prison. The police commissioner, like Manolis, is working for Kingpin, but the commissioner is working for him because Kingpin has photos of him with a cocktail waitress, cheating on his wife. Here, again, readers see an example of other public servants letting the public down by working with the Kingpin. This leads to a bloodbath, in which Coogan kills the nurse and Urich's police escort, and out of self-defense, Urich kills Coogan with the handle of his gun.

In this issue, Miller also comments about news photography (Miller, 1986). Unlike the lack of attention to detail Lee paid to journalistic technical details in the 1960s selections from *Daredevil*, Miller shows he has done his research with these issues. It shows in one editor's jargon in issue 230: "We're three minutes from a six-inch blank space on page five," he says. Thinking of text in inches is unique to professions like journalism. Likewise, to disparage Urich's recent writing, the editor says it would not be fit for the *Enquirer*, not stopping to explain what kind of publication that is.

When Urich sees Nelson's girlfriend Glori's photography, Urich gets her a job with the *Bugle* (Miller, 1986). Unlike Lee's news photographers, in Miller's writing, Urich's first instruction to Glori is to focus on action shots. With Glori, readers see an example of the journalist taking herself out of the process completely, losing all regard for her own life. In issue 229, while out in the city, Glori is robbed of her purse in a crowd, and nobody stops to help her. She marvels at the uncaring nature of the crowd. Here, ironically, she mirrors the action of the crowd. While Urich grabs Coogan's gun to save their lives and kill Coogan, Glori makes no

similar move. Throughout the entire bloodbath, she stands and takes photographs. It pays dividends in that she gets photos for the paper, but readers wonder whether she could not have aided Ulrich or saved someone's life. She is the embodiment of the natural observer, the polar opposite of Lee's photographers wanting staged poses. In issue 233, in the midst of a fight between Daredevil and a Kingpin-led fighter named Nuke, Glori takes photos again with lack of regard for her own life. Multiple times, Ulrich yells for Glori to get out of the way of wreckage from the fight and avoid getting hurt. But in the end, she gets the prized photograph to go with Ulrich's *Daily Bugle* story: "Mystery Killer Attacks Hell's Kitchen." She gets the results.

Showing his bias, Ulrich reflects on the story, calling it good because it "makes all the right people look terrible" (Miller, 1986). In this way, Ulrich has failed to maintain his objectivity, but Miller still casts him as the crusading hero. Other public servants fail the public. Representing the police, Lieutenant Manolis and the police commissioner both ended up getting blackmailed by the Kingpin. The police failed. Even after the stories were printed, the Kingpin was able to throw a number of the charges against him into long litigation, and few of the charges stick. The law failed. But the public institution that succeeded was the newspaper. With a dying Nuke in his car, Daredevil even decides it is too late to take Nuke to the hospital to save his life and that he will take him to "the one place left to take him, one purpose he can still serve" (Miller, 1986). The next day's *Daily Bugle* headline reads: "U.S. Army Super Killer," with a subhead, "Kingpin Implicated in Hell's Kitchen Slaughter." Earlier in the issue, Captain America, the ultimate symbol of the nation's virtues, says he does not stand for the U.S. Army, he stands only for the American Dream. Later, he is shown standing somberly on the top of *The Daily Bugle*, symbolizing the purveyors of truth in the world, showing that the *Bugle* is bringing justice to the world.

While the Kingpin angrily reads the *Bugle*, narration tells the reader that “one of the hit men placed on the roof of *The Daily Bugle* names the crimelord as responsible for Nuke’s assault. Then from everywhere, the charges come” (Miller, 1986). Newspapers are the only institution that has brought about real change in the “Born Again” story arc. And even while few of the legal charges against the Kingpin stick, newspapers have changed the court of public opinion. The narration reads, “In the eyes of everyone except, as yet, the law – he is a villain. He is shunned – even condemned – by the businessmen who so recently cheered him” (Miller, 1986). Only the journalist stood up to the Kingpin’s tactics and exposed him. This *All the President’s Men*-like narration shows an example of what a reporter can do. While not all the journalists in *Born Again* are portrayed positively, Miller’s work portrays the pure potential of the institution through the ideal journalist in Urich.

#### *Journalist as exception, the elite journalist Urich*

Yet despite these errors and faults, in the context of the *Daredevil* comic, Urich is continually lauded by peers and bosses as an elite journalist. In one of his earliest appearances – *Daredevil*, volume one, issue 163 – readers learn that Urich has served as a *Daily Bugle* reporter for 20 years, giving him insight and experience. Through his friendship with Daredevil, he is held up more as an exception as an elite journalist than as the rule, considering Daredevil's personal maligning of journalists as a whole. In a crowd of people in a panel on a page, it is almost always Urich who has the information. Shortly after his introduction, Urich was already seen in this role, In volume one, issue 174, Urich tells a fellow reporter covering a trial that Nelson and Murdock's partnership is over (Miller, 1981). This showcases Urich as a better fact gatherer than his reporting brethren. By the late 1970s, the comic depicted Urich giving

Daredevil information on crimes and cases regularly (McKenzie, 1979). It even became a joke, as in volume one, issue 221, when Urich sees Daredevil at his office window, Urich says, "Don't tell me. Let me guess – You need information" (O'Neil, 1985). Urich even begins to suggest to Murdock how to interpret the information Urich gives him (Brubaker, 2006). In an exchange in volume two, issue 30, Urich educates Murdock on mob politics and the idea that when a mob boss shows a weakness – like Kingpin's momentary blindness – another person kills him. When Daredevil says he found blood at Kingpin's Manhattan office, Urich quickly points out, "Blood doesn't mean he's dead, Matt" (Bendis, 2001). Urich becomes both informer and helpful investigator in his friendship with Daredevil.

Talking to Milla in a diner, Urich relates stories as if he were an eyewitness, even when he was not (Bendis, 2001). In volume two, issue 57, he talks about Murdock battling 100 Yakuza in the streets. Urich knows everything about the story from talking to people, as the fight awoke many in the neighborhood and people watched from their second- or third-story apartments. Here, readers see the depth to Urich's investigating and interviewing: "In perfect Matt Murdock fashion, not one of the witnesses (and I talked to ALL of them), not one of them could identify the red-haired man clearly," he says (Bendis, 2001). His diligence shows in that he tried to talk to everyone. He knows everything about the story: that the FBI was following Murdock, how long it takes for FBI to get backup (about three minutes, he says), that the fight was under three minutes, et cetera. He cites an American law enforcement maxim about drugs – the "ten to one" rule, that for every one kilo seized, ten make it through to the street.

Urich's knowledge is only underlined when he talks about his peers at *The Daily Bugle* (Bendis, 2001). He says he was surprised by how many college-educated editors at the *Bugle* thought the Yakuza was not real, simply a movie trope. Urich follows that up by detailing to

readers the history of the Yakuza and their psychology today, just as he lectured Murdock on mob politics in an earlier issue. Urich is so knowledgeable that when he does not know something, he is flabbergasted, such as when he learns of the Night Nurse in volume two, issue 58 (Bendis, 2001).

Urich always has big stories to break, such as one on New York mayoral candidate Randolph Winston Cherryh, which connects many of his decisions as councilman to organized crime (Miller, 1981). It is Urich who learns Daredevil is Matt Murdock in issue 163 and confirms it through a personal interview in issue 164 (McKenzie, 1979). When Urich calls under-the-radar stories his home in volume two, issue 92, *Daily Bugle* City Editor Robbie Robertson responds, "And here I thought that was the front page," referring to Urich's constant stream of big stories (Brubaker, 2006). He is so dangerous as a source of information that Daredevil's main villain, the Kingpin, has threatened his life on multiple occasions.

Urich is the model example of the devoted journalist. Nearly every time he introduces himself in the comic book, he says, "I'm Ben Urich, investigative reporter for *The Daily Bugle*," not just his name. He does this so often that he begins to do it automatically, even in non-professional meetings like when he meets Milla in a diner in volume two, issue 56 (Bendis, 2001). He says, "I'm sorry. I hate that I introduce myself like that without thinking. Somehow, in my head, my last name officially became: "Investigative reporter for *The Daily Bugle*." In *Daredevil* issue 83, when Urich begins to introduce himself that way, investigator Dakota North cuts him off, saying she already knows who he is (Brubaker, 2006). This suggests just how often Urich is devoting to time to his job. His automatic introduction is his professional one, not his personal one, implying that his professional career takes up much more of his time than his personal life.



On more than one occasion, Urich prioritizes his job over his personal life. In volume one, issue 179, at a pay phone, Urich calls his wife, telling her to put the casserole in the fridge to eat tomorrow because he has to stay at work late on the Cherryh story (Miller, 1981). When Urich gets home from work, his wife tells him he spends too much time there. Urich says he will stay at home that night, but a telephone call gets him out of the house immediately again. Urich acts fearless in *Daredevil* comics, standing up to various threats in pursuit of stories. *Daredevil* volume one, issue 179 shows Urich meeting Cherryh at a gym where Cherryh subtly threatens him to give up the story (Miller, 1981). Cherryh's hired attackers then beat up Urich until Daredevil shows up. With his super-sensitive hearing, Daredevil hears that Cherryh and The Kingpin have a meeting tomorrow, but Daredevil has to go to a hearing in life as a lawyer. He warns Urich not to follow it and that there will be other chances. Despite getting beaten up by Cherryh's men and Daredevil's advice, Urich follows it anyway (Miller, 1981). He shows his dedication by saying that he has been waiting across the street from the meeting place for four hours, taking photos of The Kingpin and others. Later in the issue, Daredevil tips Urich off to a potential trap Urich is being led into by Cherryh's men. Daredevil checks out the situation and ends up in a fight with Elektra. Urich sees the fight, and again, he goes toward the story, despite the obvious danger. He goes to the top of the building where the fight is taking place, wheezing from his cigarette addiction all the way, putting himself in minor physical pain. Elektra wins the fight against Daredevil and throws her sai at Urich, stabbing him. Urich ends up in the hospital for two weeks from the stabbing, paying for his journalistic curiosity.

Yet despite these incidents, Urich never ceases going after the story. Urich faces further threats from The Kingpin in *Daredevil*: "Born Again" and continues reporting in the face of them (Miller, 1986). He is fearless in this regard so often that in volume two, issue 76, Urich even

begins to doubt his own sanity (Bendis, 2001). In the issue, The Kingpin has requested Urich to come to where he is being held in prison and interview him for a story. Despite his past with The Kingpin, Urich agrees, but he still has anxiety. He thinks, "I don't care how good the damn story is. I don't care that he called and asked for me specifically. I don't care. I shouldn't be here. I'm not well. I'm crazy, I think. I've quietly unhinged" (Bendis, 2001). He follows that up by thinking about the dangers of his role as a watchdog journalist: "You don't get to live a long life doing the things I do," he says (Bendis, 2001). Even still, he continues to hold dangerous figures like Cherryh and The Kingpin accountable. Later in the issue, The Kingpin mentions a book Urich wrote on Spider-Man villain Norman Osborn, and it is mentioned that Osborn is suing Urich over the book. Even as an enemy, The Kingpin laughs at this and appreciates Urich's skill and bravery.

With his 20 years of experience, Urich continually gets the story before his journalistic peers. In issue 179, readers see some of the approaches Urich takes to finding and investigating stories. He calls them his two laws of journalism. The first law is "If it's not supposed to be there, it's a lead. Maybe it'll take you to the story of a lifetime, or maybe it'll just take you to the subway" (Miller, 1981). Urich is willing to attempt all angles. Indeed, this is how Urich put together the puzzle that led him to discovering Daredevil's secret identity in the first place (McKenzie, 1979). He interviewed people who no one was paying attention to and pieced together clues. The final one was Matt Murdock's girlfriend Heather Glenn being in the same place as a Daredevil happening. She was not supposed to be there. Urich's second law is "When in doubt, take a picture," speaking to his philosophy toward photography showcased in *Daredevil: "Born Again"* (Miller, 1986). News photography is not staged poses but naturalistic action.

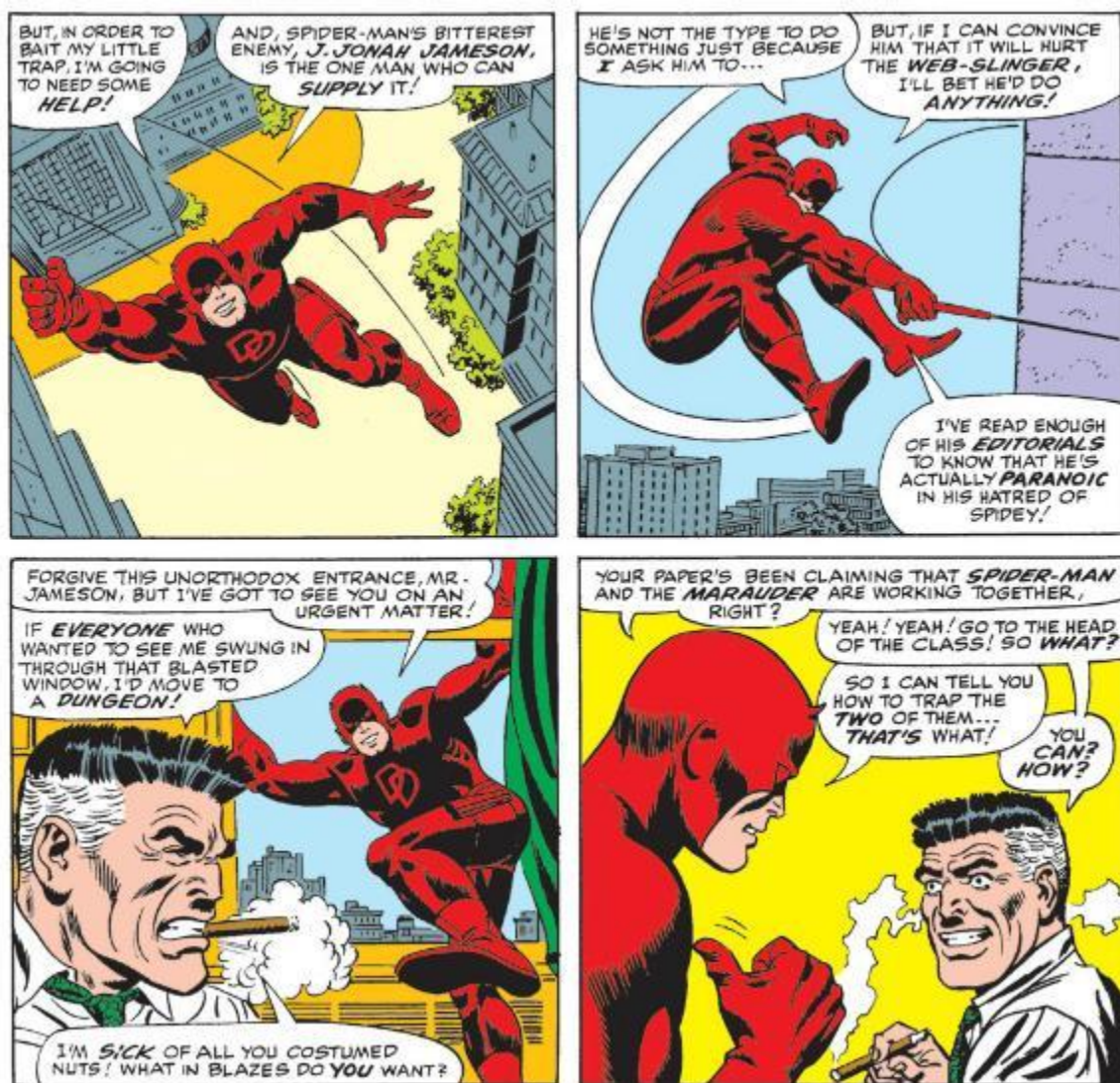


Figure 9: J. Jonah Jameson will compromise ethics to bring Spider-Man down in *Daredevil* volume one, issue 17. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

### *Unethical publisher in Daredevil comics*

Though primarily a Spider-Man character, *Daily Bugle* editor-in-chief J. Jonah Jameson does appear occasionally in *Daredevil* comics, showcasing the unethical publisher category. He

appears as early as *Daredevil* volume one, issues 16 and 17, published May 1966 and June 1966 (Lee, 1964). Even though, at the beginning of the issue, the comic's main cast of Murdock, Page and Nelson watch the TV news report of Spider-Man beating up the Masked Marauder's gang, Jameson still thinks Spider-Man is somehow behind the Marauder's crime. He thinks Spider-Man is fighting Daredevil to lure him away from the Marauder, when in reality, they are fighting because of a misunderstanding.

Nelson and Page tell Murdock that all the newspapers are saying Daredevil is with the Marauder, while *The Daily Bugle* says Spider-Man is with the Marauder. Even though every other newspaper thinks the story is one way, Jameson's bias toward Spider-Man leans him the other way. Spider-Man verbalizes concerns that his biased columns could sway the public. "Even though Jameson's editorials are unfounded, people may start believing him" (Lee, 1964). Indeed, the editorials are so popular that many people in the comic associate Jameson primarily with hating Spider-Man. When it looks to Foggy that Spider-Man may be in the wrong, his first statement is that this affirms what Jameson has said. "Jonah Jameson is right about you! You're a genuine, full-time nut," Foggy says. Daredevil even calls Jameson "Spider-Man's bitterest enemy" and says Jameson will do anything to hurt Spider-Man. "I've read enough of his editorials to know that he's actually paranoid in his hatred of Spidey," Daredevil says. (Lee, 1964).

Daredevil bases his entire plan of attack on the idea that Jameson hates Spider-Man (Lee, 1964). Daredevil asks Jameson to help set a trap for Spider-Man and the Masked Marauder, saying that he will tell Jameson what to main tomorrow's headline. Jameson not only agrees to the condition that Daredevil can dictate tomorrow's headline, but he also buys television time within the hour. Jameson is that eager to hurt Spider-Man. Unlike his characterization in later

issues, here, Jameson is tunnel-visioned in his pursuit to take down Spider-Man, not worrying about cost of television time or whether all this will sell papers.

Jameson says he will offer a reward for anyone who can connect Spider-Man to the theft (Lee, 1964). Multiple characters watch this broadcast, and readers see how each of them thinks of Jameson. Marauder, the villain of the story, even calls Jameson a "loud-mouthed fool." A chairman on the World Motors Executive Board says, "In order to sell more copies of that sensation-seeking rag of his, he's made us a target again." Everyone in the world of the *Daredevil* comic book has a negative attitude toward Jameson. Only when Daredevil captures the Marauder and his men does a police officer think Jameson might be right about Spider-Man. But even still, in his speech, the police officer alludes to never believing Jameson in the past: "Then Jameson was right about that blasted menace! We should have believed him" (Lee, 1964). Daredevil then tells the officers that neither Daredevil nor Spider-Man were in league with the Marauder, and everyone jumped to conclusions, including the prominent journalist Jameson, who should have experience enough to avoid assumptions.

Other writers have characterized Jameson in much the same way. In *Daredevil* volume one, issue 132, published April 1976, a *Daily Bugle* newspaper appears with the headline: "NEW CRIME MENACE BULLSEYE: Is he connected with Spider-Man? An Editorial by J. Jonah Jameson" (Wolfman, 1976). Even when the news has nothing to do with Spider-Man, Jameson ties his anti-Spider-Man agenda into the story. In *Daredevil* volume one, issue 163, published March 1980, Jameson calls *The Daily Bugle* progressive. "My paper was the first to expose the Spider-Man menace," he says (McKenzie, 1979). Tony Stark, alias Iron Man, replies, "Frankly, Jameson, printing unsubstantiated rumors strikes me as irresponsible journalism." In the context

of the comic book, everyone knows that Jameson is a poor journalist, and yet he remains in this position of incompetence.

The characterization persisted into the early stories of the second volume. In issue eight, Jameson calls a press conference in the wake of Spider-Man villain Mysterio's death to tell everyone he was right about Spider-Man. "He's a menace! I've been saying it for years, haven't I? What's it going to take to get through to you people" (Smith, 1998). In continuing his personal war against Spider-Man, Jameson watches the news in issue 21 and declares that the next day's editorial will be in favor of the lawsuit against Daredevil (Gale, 2001). Jameson argues with lawyer Claude Unger on the show *News Talk* in issue 22 about whether superheroes should be held liable for property damage in the pursuit of criminals (Gale, 2001). It is ironic here that Jameson is knowledgeable of the law and shows intelligence, yet ends his statements by saying simply that like Spider-Man, Daredevil is a menace. In issue 25, Jameson asserts that people cannot trust superheroes because they cannot see their faces.

Urich confronts Jameson on his bias in issue 84 (Brubaker, 2006). He complains about the Daily Bugle cover story that day, with the headline: "VIOLENCE RIPS THROUGH RYKERS. IS MURDOCK RESPONSIBLE?" Urich says there is no proof that Murdock has anything to do with the story. Jameson simply says that that is why the headline is a question, an extremely flimsy defense. Jameson says he does not have to consult Urich on headlines and that these stories and headlines sell papers. When Urich brings up that Murdock has sued a paper in the past – *The Daily Globe* for leaking his secret identity – Jameson says he already ran the story by the paper's lawyers. Jameson now contends that these stories sell papers, attempting to give his personal vendetta against Spider-Man and superheroes credibility.

As with the defense of selling papers, Jameson does show more competence as an editor when written by some writers. In *Daredevil*, volume one, issue 177, when Urich writes a story about the corruption of New York mayoral candidate Randolph Winston Cherryh, Jameson tells Urich that the story could result in a lawsuit that would cause them to lose *The Daily Bugle* (Miller, 1981). Urich asks if Jameson wants to get rid of the story, but Jameson says no. He advises Urich to make sure the facts are correct. In the Frank Miller run of *Daredevil*, Jameson stands up for the power of the press and even encourages Urich to find the story and courageously report it, no matter what threats Urich may receive. In Bendis' run on the comic, readers also see this courageous side of Jameson. Nick Fury, director of the government agency S.H.I.E.L.D., even tells a government official in volume two, issue 64: "Come near them again, and this file accidentally makes it into the personal e-mail of J. Jonah Jameson. You know who J. Jonah Jameson is? You should. He's your worst enemy. Even though you've never met him" (Bendis, 2001). Jameson is portrayed here in the watchdog role, keeping the government in check.

The character of Urich completely reverses itself when he becomes editor of Front Line (Brubaker, 2006). In issue 106, a reporter goes up to Urich and asks to do a follow-up story on Daredevil from another angle. Urich insists that the reporter should leave Daredevil alone. The reporter finds police reports on Urich's desk. Though Daredevil is not named, the reporter says it is obvious he is attack thieves on the streets, which the action of the comic confirms. The reporter wants to do a story on this, but out of friendship for Murdock, Urich denies him. He even uses a threat that Jameson used on him: "Keep it up, and you'll be on the fashion beat," he tells the reporter. Urich has become Jameson, but rather than having a hatred for Spider-Man and



other superheroes like Jameson does, Ulrich is biased because of a close friendship with Daredevil. But the effect is the same. The news goes unreported because of the editor's leanings.



Figure 10: Ben Ulrich becomes like J. Jonah Jameson as editor of *Front Line* in *Daredevil* volume two, issue 106. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

### *Daredevil's secret identity exposed in Daredevil: "Out"*

In the story "Out," *Daredevil*, volume two, issues 32 through 37, the FBI learns through an interview that Daredevil is lawyer Matt Murdock (Bendis, 2001). This is true. The FBI learn that it is widely believed in the camp of Daredevil's arch nemesis, The Kingpin, that he is



Murdock. Needing money, an FBI agent leaks the news to the *Daily Globe*, a New York City tabloid newspaper, which then runs the news as its front-page headline: "Pulp Hero of Hell's Kitchen is Blind Lawyer." A media frenzy ensues, with a large gathering of reporters outside Murdock's home at all hours, shouting questions whenever anyone peeks out or stands near the house. Flashbulbs pop frequently when one reporter in the crowd thinks he saw Daredevil.

Murdock holds a press conference where he denies that he is Daredevil and announces a \$400 million libel suit that his law office is filing against the publishers of the *Daily Globe* (Bendis, 2001). When Murdock and his law partner Foggy Nelson first meet the lawyer for the *Daily Globe*, he gloats about the strength of the paper's case and insists that the *Daily Globe* is eager to take the case to court. But after Daredevil visits the apartment of the FBI agent who leaked the story and frightens him, the agent quickly drops out as a source. The paper gets new counsel, who insists that the paper must settle out of court. Murdock and Rosenthal, the owner of the paper, haggle to an agreement of \$75 million and a printed apology on the front page of the metro section in the lower, right-hand corner. But as Murdock is about to leave, Rosenthal changes his mind because he says Murdock "annoys" him.

All the while, *Daily Bugle* publisher J. Jonah Jameson confronts his news staff after the *Daily Globe* was able to get the scoop of Daredevil's identity. Reporter Ben Urich, who knows that Murdock is Daredevil, lies to his editor, saying the story is not true (Bendis, 2001). When Jameson asks why, Urich says it's because he knows who Daredevil is, and it's not Murdock, but he refuses to say who it is. He calls an unveiling of Daredevil's identity "not news," primarily because Jameson's words and enthusiasm suggest that he is just out to take down masked superheroes. Urich also says that he has a special relationship with Daredevil as an anonymous source, and if he gave up the source, it would not just be a betrayal, but he would also lose out on

future stories. Jameson is so angry at this that he yells at Urich to leave the office but says nothing when Urich asks if he is fired. Before the press conference, Urich meets with Murdock and asks him what he is going to say at the press conference. Murdock says nothing and terminates the two's special relationship, saying he needs to condense his life with his secret out. During the press conference, while the other reporters are a frenzy of activity, Urich is downcast and does not appear to be doing anything. Though Sangiacomo insists that Urich is an example of a fine journalist and that Bendis understands journalists, there are at least three different frames of the journalist in "Out," and none of them are positive.



Figure 11: *The Daily Globe* front page from *Daredevil* volume two, issue 32. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission

### *The pack reporters in Daredevil: "Out"*

According to Ragovin, "In innumerable movies, television programs, and novels, reporters travel in packs to cover fast-breaking news by harassing their subjects and shoving their way into breaking news events" (Ragovin, 2010). The "pack reporter" is clearly evident in "Out" (Bendis, 2001). As soon as the *Daily Globe* breaks the news that Murdock is Daredevil, a large

pack of journalists waits outside Murdock's apartment for a statement. And none of the other characters in *Daredevil* see them as ethical or paint them positively. "The barbarians are literally at the gate," Murdock's best friend Nelson says. Murdock implies that the *Daily Globe* is full of "poor journalists."

In multiple scenes in "Out," the readers see the journalistic pack acting as Skewes said they do in television, constantly shouting over each other (Skewes, 2009). When Nelson peeks his head out of a high window in an apartment building, reporters congregated outside do not wait to ask questions (Bendis, 2001). They immediately start shouting questions, ones that assume the *Daily Globe* report is true: "Why doesn't he show his face?" "Why are you covering for him?" During Murdock's press conference, an army of cameramen, armed with big, flashing lights, take video. Readers see lines of "SNAPSNAPSNAP" over four panels on one page, denoting that photographers are taking photo after photo throughout the entire statement. Photos are taken before Murdock even says anything. After the press conference, when Murdock denies being Daredevil, a sea of speech bubbles appears with several reporters each shouting, "MURDOCK!" with separate questions like "Do you know who Daredevil is?" and "Do you know Daredevil?" The reporters, some with tape recorders and others with microphones, push against each other toward Murdock, in pursuit of the story at all costs.

But the journalistic pack is not just portrayed as an annoyance or invaders of privacy. "Out" goes further, casting journalists in the role of bogeyman and outsider (Bendis, 2001). At night, during a rainstorm, with most of the journalists camping out and huddled under umbrellas, Daredevil sneaks out to a street lamppost and peers at the crowd, telling himself, "I'm not afraid of you. I'm the man without fear." A cold, wide-eyed and frightened Daredevil takes off his mask briefly, showing to the pack who he really is, but no one sees him from high above. He tells

himself in this moment, "Look up here – I am not afraid of you. You will hear me out. You will understand why I am. What this uniform means to me. You will hear me." But the moment only lasts briefly as he realizes what he is doing, the ramifications of which would mean potentially ruining his life and going to jail. In this moment, he also realizes the impossibility of the journalist truly understanding. He had flirted with the idea of coming clean before, but Nelson tells him that it would be impossible to salvage his life and confirm the story that Daredevil is Murdock. He quickly puts the mask back on and scampers away. In this moment, one journalist in the pack thinks he saw Daredevil and alerts everyone else. Photos are taken, and lights from video cameras shine on the buildings. Artist Alex Maleev's art portrays the camera lights like a prison's searchlights, shining on the nearby buildings, with Daredevil on the loose. There is a distance in this characterization of journalists, the idea that journalists and everyone else are entirely separate from each other, and to become visible in the searchlight of journalists is very dangerous.



Figure 12: Cameras look like police searchlights in *Daredevil* volume two, issue 35. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

### *The unethical publisher in Daredevil: "Out"*

In movies from the 1930s and 1940s, the idea of the evil publisher became a cliché. Both publishers in "Out," the *Daily Bugle's* J. Jonah Jameson and the *Daily Globe's* Mr. Rosenthal, are

wrapped up in personal vendettas and let those ill feelings drive the engine of their respective newspapers (Bendis, 2001). Jameson is livid at the *Daily Globe* breaking the news that Murdock is Daredevil, but it is because of economic concerns and his editorial fight against masked vigilantes. "A slimy superhero and a lawyer? All in the same person? Hoo hoo hohohohoo, it's Christmas!" he says. Jameson proposes doing every story on Murdock he can think of, including ones on business with The Kingpin, his medical records and even past relationships with girls. But it is all in the pursuit of making money, while dragging a vigilante with "questionable morals" through the mud at the same time.

Rosenthal's *Daily Globe* buys the story from an FBI agent and then prints it, citing only "unidentified sources," which, in actuality, is just the FBI agent (Bendis, 2001). Even a journalistic outsider like the lawyer Murdock is shown flabbergasted at the paper's lack of vetting. "The entire article and not one source named. It's amazing. In this day and age?" he says. When Rosenthal and Murdock come to an agreement on an out-of-court settlement, Rosenthal changes his mind. It is not because he believes the story to be the truth but because Murdock "annoys" him. Murdock chooses to settle for the exact maximum amount that Rosenthal was willing to settle for. Through using his enhanced senses, Daredevil can hear people's heartbeats, a method he, no doubt, employed here to determine what Rosenthal's exact maximum price would be. But Rosenthal takes it as no coincidence and thinks he is being conned. He continues on the path to a trial merely because he wants to maintain his pride and fight against Murdock, who showed a nonchalant cockiness during the negotiations. Rosenthal's vendetta, for the sake of his ego, is to take down Murdock, regardless of the truth or the public interest.

*Journalist with a conflict of interest in Daredevil: "Out"*

Unlike other Marvel series, in this story, Urich stands out more through his inaction than his action (Bendis, 2001). While all his journalistic peers are scribbling notes, shoving tape recorders in Murdock's face and shouting questions at him, Urich is silent during the press conference. In the newsroom, Urich lies to Jameson that Murdock is not Daredevil. He works more to kill stories than break new ones in "Out." When Jameson asks who Daredevil is, then, Urich's argument to Jameson is two-sided: Daredevil is an anonymous source that he needs to protect to further prospects for future reporting, and even if Daredevil was not an anonymous source who needed protecting, "this isn't news." Urich considers the social justice aspect of reporting Murdock as Daredevil and likens it to a character assassination. But, essentially, the identity of a local, masked vigilante is news.

Urich even seems silently to admit it when he later meets with Murdock (Bendis, 2001). Murdock says, "I cannot ask you to lie or cheat for me anymore. It's just wrong. Eventually someone is going to figure out the nature of our relationship, and they will try to get to me through you." Murdock's decision to end their secret partnership is mostly for Urich's safety, but the intent of "lie or cheat" remains the same. Urich says nothing, silently admitting that he has compromised his journalistic integrity for a friend, Murdock. "You probably helped keep me out of jail, and I will always be grateful to you for your friendship," Murdock says. Those are not the ideal words that should come out of a key anonymous source.



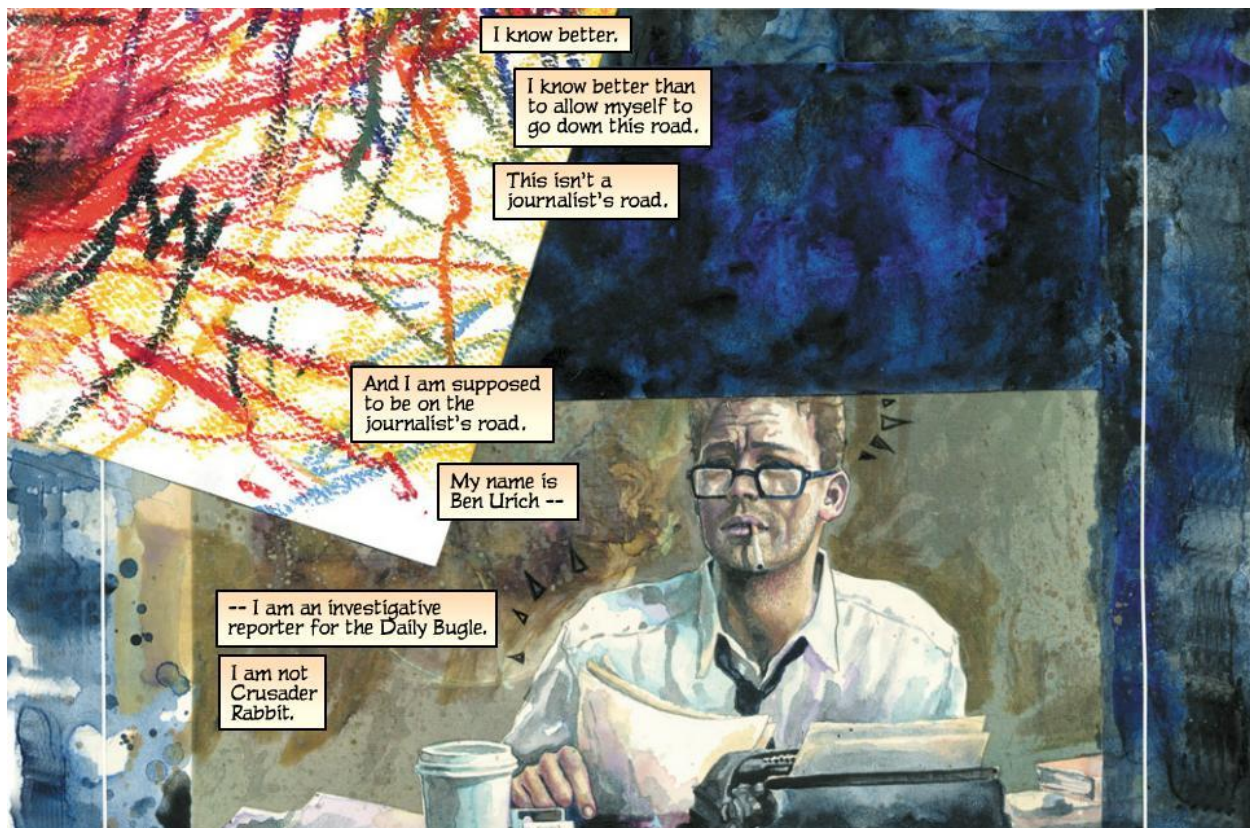


Figure 13: Ben Urich, contemplating whether to follow up on a story in *Daredevil* volume two, issue 17. *Daredevil*, © and TM Marvel and Subs. Used with Permission.

### *Journalist with a conflict of interest in Daredevil comics*

But perhaps Urich's biggest journalistic faux pas is that, like Clark Kent and Peter Parker, Urich is simply too close to his interview subjects. Unlike Kent and Parker, Urich is not a superhero himself, but his close friendship with one leads him to lie, manipulate and withhold the news from the public. At the conclusion of "Out," Murdock breaks contact with Urich primarily because he does not want to make Urich lie for him anymore (Bendis, 2001). After Urich had not talked to Murdock in a year and a half, Milla reiterates this in volume two, issue 58, but Urich says he would have lied for him (Bendis, 2001). Even still, during their time apart,

Urich continues to write stories about Murdock, including the article for *The Pulse* at the end of that issue. He continues to write stories on a conflict of interest frequently.

When Urich finds out about the Night Nurse in issue 58, he is surprised he did not know about her (Bendis, 2001). Murdock replies, "It's because it's a big secret, so shhh." Despite this response, Urich does write a story about the Night Nurse, as seen in volume two, issue 80, showing some rebellion from Murdock (Bendis, 2001). However, he fails to name any sources in the story, including the identity of the nurse, once again protecting the superhero community and by extension, *Daredevil*.

The story arc "Wake Up," contained in *Daredevil* volume two, issues 16 through 19, provides an ironic case. Urich is portrayed as a dogged reporter, finding a story that no one else is reporting on, that of the tenuous mental state of the son of the villain Leap Frog (Bendis, 2001). However, the story reveals that Urich feels connected to the boy because they both were abused by the parents when they were children. In the meantime, Urich's editor, Jameson, has assigned him to cover the Kingpin's trial. Urich minimizes the importance of it, saying it is only "the latest trial of the century" and that Kingpin will never go to jail for what he has done. But as a reporter, he is neglecting covering the story assigned to cover another story in which he has a conflict of interest. As he sits in the courtroom and has these thoughts, the panels show a flashback from Frank Miller's "Born Again," when Urich was on the phone with the nurse under the Kingpin's employ (Miller, 1986). The nurse was committing a murder, and Urich sat in horror, listening to it. This flashback suggests that Urich's bitterness with the Kingpin comes from their past, and the Kingpin is yet another source that Urich has developed a conflict of interest with.

And Urich is cognizant of his inner ethical struggle. "Objectivity. I think it is fair to say that I am having some issues with that part of my job lately," Urich says (Bendis, 2001). Volume two, issue 18 begins with Urich thinking about the American Society of Newspaper Editors' Code of Ethics. As Urich goes through the different principles, his words are juxtaposed with telling imagery. The narration reads: "Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues, as human beings deserving of respect." This is contrasted with a flashback from the Frank Miller '80s comics, a panel of when Elektra stabbed Urich to deter him from his reporting (Miller, 1981). The comic implies, how can he maintain his objectivity then? The maxim, "Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know" is shown with a panel calling back to the cover from *Daredevil*: "Born Again" with Urich at his typewriter and Daredevil's shadow over him (Miller, 1986). This panel evokes the image's idea that Daredevil has an affect on his job and what he writes. Moreover, it recalls the fact that Urich, distressed by the Kingpin's threats in "Born Again," had an interest other than the public's right to know: to bring down the Kingpin.

As he deliberates whether he should continue to cover the story about the Leap Frog's son, he realizes his conflict of interest. "I know better. I know better than to allow myself to go down this road. This isn't a journalist's road. And I am supposed to be on a journalist's road," he says (Bendis, 2001). When he does this, Urich says he becomes a crusader, and all that gets him is "shot, stabbed, threatened or mutilated," like his past run-ins with the Kingpin. He neglects to mention the ethical reasoning for not becoming a crusader, such as journalist's need for objectivity. Again, he only focuses on the personal ramifications. He thinks about Daredevil's dual role as lawyer and superhero, which he equates to lawyer equals law and Daredevil equals justice. This shows his lack of regard for the legal system at this point, thinking that someone has

to take justice in their own hands, and the law only goes so far in achieving its goals. There is an obvious parallel here to Urich's situation. Should he be reporter or crusader? Reporter is the legal role a citizen can take, and it serves a function in society. But should Urich take the situation into his own hands and crusade, losing his objectivity in the process?

Despite the fact that he recognizes that he is too close to the story, Urich cannot stop himself, going to interview the police, teachers, fellow students, Leap Frog's son multiple times and finally, Daredevil (Bendis, 2001). He begins writing the story in narration, as some narration is crossed out and replaced by other narration, simulating the writing process. This implies that the narration is the story in essence. However, this is not a journalistic story at all. It buries the lead and fails to even explain the essence of what happened. It philosophizes about life in general and what it should be like for Leap Frog's son. It reads much more like an editorial than a hard news story or even a feature. This lack of regard for journalistic process is further reflected in the short story-like headline: "WAKE UP: A CHILD'S NIGHTMARE." If Urich had not already crossed the ethical boundary with the story, he does so totally at the end of "Wake Up," when he takes Leap Frog's son into his household.

Urich actually starts to use the newspaper to try to aid his friend in *Daredevil*, volume two, issues 82 through 87. A conversation between Urich and Nelson becomes an argument, as Urich says Nelson has crossed the line to help Murdock, and he could get disbarred (Brubaker, 2006). Nelson says he has not, but he accuses Urich of doing too little to aid Murdock, saying Urich is a friend when it is convenient, "in between the headlines." Jameson tells Urich to cover Murdock's hearing, but Urich tells him to cover it himself. He tells Jameson that Murdock is his friend, and it would be a conflict of interest. Instead of assigning the story to another reporter, Jameson simply tells Urich that he is a great reporter, but he needs to "find his objectivity"

(Brubaker, 2006). Urich admits that Jameson is right but for the wrong reasons. Instead of admitting that he is not acting ethically on the job lately and that he should start thinking in the interest of the public, Urich thinks he should cover the hearing because he should help his friend, Murdock.

Readers perhaps never see Urich more slanted than they do in this story arc. At the hearing, in narration, readers see Urich's thoughts on the FBI director gunning for Murdock: "Some spoiled little bureaucrat with too much power, taking down a real hero, someone who saves lives almost every day. It's pathetic" (Brubaker, 2006). Urich complains about a headline in *The Daily Bugle* to Jameson, but it becomes clear quickly that the only reason why he complains is because it targets Murdock. Later, Urich and investigator Dakota North try to learn from Ivan Murphy the identity of another lawyer. They have bought pictures of another person masquerading as Daredevil while Murdock is in jail. When trying to get information, Urich even lies while asking the man questions. The man says, "Lookin' for a lawyer? Spider-Man finally suin' your butts?" and Urich simply responds, "Yes. That's right. How about a hundred bucks for his name?"

Urich writes a story about the imposter Daredevil in action. The intent is to fool audiences into thinking Daredevil is not Murdock. Daredevil is still patrolling the streets, while Murdock is in jail, so the two cannot be the same person. Although Urich knows the imposter Daredevil is not the real Daredevil, he pretends he does not. He obtained the photographs for the story illicitly, and Urich knew the answers given from his sources were incorrect about Daredevil as he got them. Urich complains to Jameson that his story on Daredevil is only on page four. Jameson says he bumped it because the story about The Punisher's violent altercation is on page one, a sound news judgment. Urich only complains because the exposure on page four for the

story is less than that of the exposure for page-one stories, limiting the impact of his knowingly false article. "You should feel lucky I'm running it at all, Ben," Jameson says. He again goes back to Urich's bias. "I asked you to find your objectivity a few weeks ago. And now you're further from it than ever" (Brubaker, 2006). He calls Urich not a journalist but a crusader, attempting to clear Daredevil's name. Urich sees the hypocrisy in this and brings up Jameson's past with Spider-Man, but this does not change Urich's actions.

Urich is not the only journalist depicted in *Daredevil* comics with a conflict of interest. In an occasional supporting role, Peter Parker treats the profession mostly as an easy way to make money, taking photographs of himself. In volume two, issue 25, Parker dons the guise of Daredevil to solve a problem for Murdock, but he uses the opportunity to create news and get his photographs published (Gale, 2001). He quickly takes off the costume on a rooftop and grabs his camera. About 35 years earlier, Nelson wonders about how there is always a photographer around during Spider-Man's fights (Lee, 1964). Murdock thinks, "Foggy's right. So many of the web-slinger's exploits have been photographed – you'd almost think he set up an automatic camera and takes the pix himself." This serves as the story explanation, even though it makes little sense, unless Spider-Man uncannily could choreograph when and how his fights took place.

## Discussion

What makes *Daredevil* and other comic books like it so ripe for study is that they depict journalists in a wide variety of ways. The *Daredevil* comics studied in this thesis showcase journalism itself as both competent and incompetent. Sometimes a single journalistic piece can fall in both the competent journalism and incompetent journalism categories. Poor headlines trumpet sound journalistic pieces and vice versa. The very physicality of the paper – broadsheet, Berliner or tabloid – changes frequently over the years from primarily broadsheet in the 1960s to primarily tabloid in the 2000s and back and forth.

Regardless, journalism is everywhere in *Daredevil* comics. Nearly every character references, reads, uses or reacts to the media. With the introduction of supporting character and journalist Ben Urich, journalism in *Daredevil* comics went from the background to the foreground. Urich is held up in the comic book as an exceptional journalist, even while turning in incompetent pieces often and acting with a conflict of interest always. Urich's impetus into journalism was not a love of the medium but rather a failure at another endeavor, and he decries his own newspaper and editor in conversation (Bendis, 2001). Regarding the *Daredevil* secret, he is more preoccupied with the fame, fortune and prestige that comes with winning the Pulitzer Prize, rather than any agony over whether the public has the right to know or whether it is his journalistic duty to tell the story. This speaks to his lack of loyalty to the profession and to his news organization. Ironically Urich himself becomes the unethical editor, though for polar-opposite reasons to that of Jameson.

Other journalists in the *Daredevil* comics are pack journalists, mobbing potential sources for a story. Unlike Urich, whose investigations lead him to interviewing people other journalists do not think to talk to, the pack exists because these journalists go to the obvious celebrities,

camping out for months at a time to nab a headline-grabbing story. They push, shove and show a general disregard for their interview subjects' lives. As a result, many other characters in *Daredevil* comics speak of them with hatred throughout. Perhaps most tellingly, Murdock does not seem to even consider Urich a journalist in the truest sense of the word. His relationship to Urich is forged on Urich's occupation and his closeness to sources and information. However, Murdock treats journalists, especially in the volume two issues, with contempt. Yet he never shows that same contempt toward Urich. Urich is something other than the construct of journalist that Murdock knows. Murdock often lumps journalists all into one category – "vultures," a "zoo" – but he never includes Urich in that category. It is the pack journalists that *Daredevil* comics show the most ill will toward.

*Daredevil* comics showcase several disparate categories of journalists – equal parts negative and positive – displaying the complex feelings people can have toward journalism and journalists. In *Daredevil* comics, journalism is an absolutely vital aspect of everyday life. It provides water-cooler conversation. People are admonished for not reading newspapers. Information from newspapers is shown as helpful to heroes and villains alike, spurring them into action to drastically alter events in the stories. Even while demeaning the importance of what television newscasters say or calling tabloids "rags," everyone in the comic is voracious in their news appetites.

Likewise, journalists are shown in various negative and positive lights. Even when journalists are behaving ethically and performing admirably in their job, other characters sometimes have negative feelings toward them, particularly Murdock. Characters blame them for not seeing the bigger picture in the ramifications of reporting the news, even when it's true. They blame reporters for even being present at all, like the pack reporting of headline court cases. In



contrast, Urich is held up as an exceptional journalist even when showing various incompetencies.

The comics show that feelings toward journalists are not black and white. Journalistic performance does not correlate with public perception. Various other factors influence those feelings. Murdock's profession informs much of his disdain for journalists. He automatically wishes for them to go away when present because of the unpredictable distraction they pose in his trial cases. Likewise, Murdock is someone with a secret. He wants to avoid investigative journalists, people whose profession it is to find stories. Murdock only becomes friends with a journalist when Urich fails to report Daredevil's secret identity and actively lies for him.

With different writers or artists, there are always positive and negative attributes given to the journalism and journalist characters in *Daredevil* comics. The degree to which journalism is accurate to real-world realities – believable headlines, inverted pyramid-style news stories, news judgment, strong grammar and AP style – varies, depending on the writer. Journalism and journalists during Lee's writing tenure in the 1960s were in the background, showing lesser importance to their role in the story. While newspapers, radio news and television news made frequent appearances, it was often to inform a character or inspire a character into action. As a result, the journalistic pieces shown in Lee's writing lacked real-world significance. Meanwhile, the work of writers Miller and Bendis, who made wide use of the character Urich, showed a much stronger relevance to how journalists work and how journalistic pieces are actually produced. Still, even though Bendis had personal conversations with a journalist on the character of Urich, the character showed inconsistencies during his run, displaying that even when informed, the depiction is not always accurate and positive. In fact, Murdock showed particularly

negative feelings toward journalists in Bendis' writing, amidst the exposure of his secret identity in *The Daily Globe*.

Urich resembles the crusading journalist, skeptical of business interests and government in the *Daredevil* comics of the 1970s and 1980s especially. In the context of *Daredevil* comics, The Kingpin represented business interests, and New York mayoral candidate Randolph Winston Cherryh was a government interest. Urich brings down both through investigative pieces, even in the face of threats (Miller, 1981).

Newspapers also saw the diversification in race and gender outlined by McPherson (McPherson, 2006). The African-American *Daily Bugle* City Editor Robbie Robertson can be found in *Daredevil* comics dating back to at least the 1980s. Robertson actually traces his comic origins to his introduction in *The Amazing Spider-Man* issue 51, published August 1967, making him a trailblazing character in the medium. Women like Kat Farrell also found success at *The Daily Bugle* in the pages of *Daredevil* comics.

Perhaps most tellingly, *Daredevil* comics have exhibited the pack journalists hunting down celebrities for stories, what McPherson refers to as a strong part of modern journalism, for a long time. Most notably, in *Daredevil* comics since 1998, journalists have camped outside buildings and aggressively pursued the celebrity scoop, even putting themselves in harm's way in the process. Yet pack journalists and a newspaper focusing on the celebrity of superheroes has appeared in one form or another since the comic's inception in 1964, making *Daredevil* both reflective of the modern day and before its time journalistically, as well.

### *Limitations*

The greatest limitation of this study was not having access to every issue of *Daredevil* comics. While Urich's character was not introduced until 1978, the *Daredevil* comics of the 1960s still had journalism in the background, showcasing how the characters used the media and consumed and reacted to their messages. A further study, looking at every issue in the history of *Daredevil*, might illuminate some insights into journalism not found in this study. In addition, adding *Daredevil* mini-series and other non-*Daredevil* appearances by the character would add to the research. It would also add to the longitudinal nature of the study, allowing future researchers to more thoroughly trace the evolution of journalism and journalists against the history of the field.

#### *Suggestions for further research*

As comic book research is limited, especially investigations into specific titles or journalists in specific titles, more research in these areas is needed. In particular, comic book titles, in which main or supporting characters are journalists, call out for further research. Since it includes Urich, Jameson and *The Daily Bugle* staff, research on *Spider-Man* comics is an obvious venture. Unlike *Daredevil*, *Spider-Man* comics have more comprehensive collections, especially an out-of-print *Amazing Spider-Man* Complete Comic Book Collection CD-ROM, which contains every issue of *Amazing Spider-Man* from its creation in the 1960s until 2006. However, since it is out of print, finding the CD-ROM could be difficult and expensive. Using the Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited subscription service is another possible avenue. However, *Spider-Man* research would be more useful if researchers took a census of every major *Spider-Man* comic book ever, which would amount to a much bigger census than every *Daredevil* issue. This is because while *Daredevil* never had more than one monthly title in the character's history,

Spider-Man has almost always had more than one title and usually around four or five titles. A search of *Spider-Man* comics on Marvel Digital Comics Unlimited comes up with 1,071 available comics digitally. A study of *Spider-Man* comics would be painstaking but fruitful.

Research on comic book titles with journalistic plots and journalists as main characters is an even more obvious outlet for further comic book research in this regard. Titles like *Deadline*, *The Pulse* or the various *Front Line* mini-series associated with Marvel events could serve as the source of a study. Likewise, like *Spider-Man*, a census of *Superman* comics would be painstaking but insightful. Since *Superman* comics are older, dating back to the late 1930s, a study produced from *Superman* comics would provide even more material for a researcher to compare and contrast journalism trends with the decades the stories were written in. With further studies on how journalists are depicted in different comic book titles, future researchers can see how the depictions are similar or different across titles, analyzing what informs these similarities or differences.

It may prove necessary to add categories to the list analyzed in this study. However, the categories presented in this study cover a wide spectrum of the types of depictions of journalists not only in *Daredevil* comics but in comic books in general. It is very likely that applying these categories to an investigation of another title would prove fruitful.

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## Vita

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